



Picture: Handicap International

# **Research into Refugees' Employment and Income Generation Opportunities in Thailand and Myanmar;** with particular attention on opportunities for the most vulnerable groups, including people with disabilities in the Burmese Border Refugee Camps

# Final Report

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## Abbreviations

AAR Japan	Association for Aid and Relief, Japan
ADRA	Adventist Development and Relief Agency
APCD	Asia-Pacific Development Center on Disability
ARC	American Refugee Committee
CCSDPT	The Committee for the Coordination of Services to Displaced Persons in Thailand
DPO	Disabled People's Organization
ECHO	European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department
EMC	Emerging Markets Consulting
FGD	Focus group discussion
HEA	Household Economy Approach
HI	Handicap International
ILO	International Labour Organization
MFI	Microfinance institution
MILI	Myanmar Independent Living Initiative
NGO	Non-governmental organization
PWD	People with Disability
SHG	Self-help group
TBC	The Border Consortium
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WEAVE	Women's Education for Advancement and Empowerment

## Executive Summary

This study was undertaken in four refugee camps along the Thai-Myanmar border in Tak and Mae Hong Son provinces from October-November 2014 by Emerging Markets Consulting with the support and funding of Handicap International and UNHCR. This study sought to identify existing livelihood practices among refugees and refugees with disabilities as well as assess potential employment and income-generating opportunities in the areas surrounding the camps.

Qualitative and quantitative data was collected from local leaders, local and international organizations working in the camps, individual refugees with disabilities, and from households containing at least person with a disability. The analysis of this data led to a range of findings, which are highlighted below and detailed in the following report:

- The majority of households interviewed participated in some form of agricultural work in Myanmar. Agricultural work continues to be the most common and most desired form of work for these households, but individual refugees with disabilities more commonly reported livestock raising and petty trade as their preferred livelihood options.
- 25% of the household interviews reported having at least one member who had taken a vocational training course. Of these households, 25% reported having used the skills gained from that course to earn income.
- 68% of interviewed households believe that they need additional training to pursue their desired livelihood options, while only 17% consider vocational training to be currently available to them.
- Lack of access to start-up capital was the most commonly reported barrier to desired livelihoods as well as a commonly reported reason why more people did not attend vocational trainings. Lack of accessible land, lack of confidence, and lack of skills and education were also commonly reported barriers to desired livelihoods.
- Agriculture was the dominant sector in the surveyed areas outside of the camps and included 57% of all surveyed employers, with hospitality being the next most prominent industry (16%).
- 29% of employers surveyed either currently hire or have previously hired people with disabilities. 34% of respondents would be prepared to hire people with disabilities in the future.
- 57% of employers surveyed have hired refugees, while 60% have hired migrants. The most common type of work for which refugees and migrant workers are hired is low-skilled agricultural labor followed by low-skilled manual labor in construction and the manufacturing industry.

Recommendations on addressing the barriers identified in the findings, as well as establishing partnerships with local Thai employers to enhance refugees' skills set that could be used both in Thailand and Myanmar and other general recommendations are also detailed in the report. These include working with both service providers and local organizations, such as the established self-help groups for people with disabilities, to advocate for more inclusive services, including access to start-up capital and accessible land for cultivation. Key methods of information dissemination in the camps regarding jobs and services should also be tested and adapted to ensure equal access to opportunities.

## 1 Background and Rationale

In light of recent political changes in Myanmar, the protracted refugee situation in Thai border camps has gained renewed attention with regard to searching for possible solutions. Specifically, potential voluntary repatriation of Burmese refugees became the focus of the multi-stakeholder discussion, involving the Thai and Myanmar governments, international organizations and multiple NGOs. Although there is no official government policy with regard to repatriation, the international community is currently in the process of gradually revising the overarching approach from humanitarian assistance to promoting self-reliance for the refugees.<sup>1</sup>

In practice, this change translates into a number of programs being developed and expanded in the camps to explore and support sustainable livelihood options for Burmese refugees, as well as develop technical and vocational skills that could be used both in the camps and in Myanmar for income generation. Considering the multifaceted nature of this initiative and the intricacies of current political processes in both Thailand and Myanmar, significant efforts and continuous cooperation of stakeholders are needed to develop sustainable solutions for Burmese refugees.

Moreover, while the official numbers have not yet been collected<sup>2</sup>, there is a sizeable proportion of refugees with disabilities currently residing in the border camps that require even more extensive and tailored support in order to overcome specific barriers to livelihoods, employment and services faced by this extremely vulnerable population group. In this context, Handicap International (HI) with funding support of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), commissioned EMC to conduct a study of existing livelihood and income-generating opportunities for refugees with disabilities in Thailand and Myanmar, with a particular focus on accessibility of these options to the target group. This study seeks to identify existing livelihood practices among refugees and refugees with disabilities, as well as assess potential employment and income-generating opportunities in the areas surrounding the camps, with the following specific objectives:

- To improve understanding and document/analyze the labor market and its access to people with disabilities on the Thailand-Myanmar border camps in the perspective of the durable solutions including repatriation of refugees in Myanmar.
- To improve understanding from livelihood services providers in the camps about how the skills developed in the camps are matching with labor markets out of the camps in Thailand and assess their level of inclusion (existing barriers, e.g. physical, attitudes, practices, policies)

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<sup>1</sup> The first CCSDPT-supported initiative to shift away from “care and maintenance” approach towards enhancing self-reliance and expanding livelihood activities took place after the regime change in Thailand in 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Currently, HI is one of several organizations that register refugees with disabilities to the extent possible. However, given the fast pace of changes in the camps, these datasets need to be constantly updated, which requires continuous efforts. As a result, the total number of refugees with disabilities in all the camps is currently unknown.



- To increase awareness of the above issues amongst refugees and humanitarian and development stakeholders

The study is meant to facilitate the implementation of the different options for durable solutions for refugees in line with the sector strategy highlighted in UNHCR's "Strategic Framework for Durable Solutions 2013/14". The development of the Livelihood Sector is a cornerstone of this strategic framework which envisions conducting comprehensive needs assessments to design relevant skills trainings that coincide with livelihood opportunities and promote independence and self-reliance. The same document also stresses the importance of ensuring equitable access and participation of vulnerable groups.



## 2 Methodology

### 2.1 Overview

This study was conducted in line with the Strategic Framework for Durable Solutions, developed by the UNHCR and the Committee for the Coordination of Services to Displaced Peoples in Thailand (CCSDPT) in 2013 (discussed in more detail in literature review). Unlike most of the livelihood and vulnerability studies conducted in the border camps in Thailand, this research focuses on a very specific population group that combines characteristics from two vulnerable populations: people with disabilities and refugees. As a result, the research methodology is in essence a synthesis of several different approaches that capture household ecosystems in a comprehensive way, vulnerabilities pertaining to refugees specifically, as well as questions developed based on international best practices to capture relevant aspects and spectrum of disability among the target population. In addition, the study team had to be aware of the unique challenges associated with collecting data among disabled populations. Therefore, this study consisted of several mutually complementing components that addressed different groups of stakeholders, described in more detail below.

The study team started with an extensive literature review of previous studies and analyses on the topics of Burmese refugees in Thailand and possible voluntary repatriation in the context of a changing political environment in Myanmar. It also examined livelihood and vulnerability assessments conducted in the target area over the last several years, HI programmatic reports on similar initiatives in other countries in the Asia-Pacific, as well as reports from key actors in refugee assistance (UNHCR, The Border Consortium, Adventist Development and Relief Agency, etc.) Relevant information and best practices from the literature review were used by our experts to develop the research tools for primary data collection. A separate literature review was conducted to assess the current and future labor market demand in Myanmar, although it should be noted that the information currently available on the subject is limited.

For this study, in consultation with HI team members, the study team selected four camps based on HI's project activities for people with disabilities:

- Tak province: Mae La, Umpiem Mai, and Nu Po camps
- Mae Hong Son province: Mae La Oon camp

The data collection was carried out over two weeks in 2014, from October 27 to November 7, by two independent teams: one team collected data in the camps and one team interviewed local employers in the surrounding areas, including interviews with high-level business representatives in Tak province. Both teams met in Mae Sot for a mid-point review at the end of the first week and for a final update at the end of the data collection.

With the support of HI staff, the data collection teams were able to exceed the proposed sample sizes for both refugee households (from 120 to 132) and local employers (from 90 to 109). Details of primary data collection within Thailand are provided in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Primary data collection**

	Mae La	Nu Po	Umpiem Mai	Mae La Oon	Total
Households (HH) surveyed	60	26	26	20	<b>132</b>
Total # people in surveyed HHs	464	137	140	109	850
Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)	2	2	2	2	8
FGD participants	10	10	10	10	<b>40</b>
In-depth interviews (IDIs) with people with disabilities					<b>7<sup>3</sup></b>
Meetings with Camp Committees (CC)	1	1	1	1	4
CC interview participants (total)					<b>12</b>
Meetings with Self Help Groups (SHGs) <sup>4</sup>	1	1	1	1	3
SHG interview participants (total)					<b>8</b>
IDIs with employers (nearest camp)	58	19	18	14	<b>109</b>
IDIs with employer associations					<b>2</b>
IDIs with key informants in Thailand					<b>7</b>
IDIs with key informants in Myanmar					<b>11</b>
of which	community leaders in Karen state				5
	repatriated refugees in Yangon and Hpa-an				2
	experts (relevant NGOs and DPOs)				4
Total number of people interviewed for this study (including FGD participants)					<b>328</b>
Total number of people represented in this study (including all 850 people who live in the 132 households surveyed in the camps)					1,046

## 2.2 Quantitative survey for refugee households

To collect the most recent information on refugees' livelihoods and income-generating activities currently practiced in the camps, the team developed a quantitative questionnaire based on the Household Economy Approach (see Appendix I) and adapted it to the realities of a refugee camp and the project objectives. In particular, the team added several questions on disability to the

<sup>3</sup> Individual interviews were conducted in all four camps: 1 in Umpiem Mai and 2 in Mae La, Nu Po and Mae La Oon each.

<sup>4</sup> In Mae La, Nu Po, and Umpiem Mai, self-help groups were already established as a part of ongoing HI projects. In Mae La Oon, another previously established group of landmine survivors was interviewed as a substitute.

household member questions and specific questions pertaining to living in a refugee camp. In addition, a section on existing skills and previous vocational training was included in order to identify potential opportunities with regard to local labor demand and skill shortages.

In order to collect detailed information on refugees with disabilities in the target households, the team in consultation with HI experts decided to incorporate disability indicators developed by the Washington Group (see Appendix I) into the quantitative questionnaire, which allowed us to collect information on the number of people with disabilities in each surveyed household as well as their age, gender, type and severity of impairment.

The questionnaire was translated into Burmese and administered in both Burmese and Karen (primarily Sgaw dialect), which reflects the linguistic diversity of the target population. In order to ensure successful implementation of the survey, the team hired qualified enumerators with multilingual capacity and previous experience of conducting research and translating work in the target camps, and paired them with in-camp HI staff to easily locate the target households and mitigate some of the concerns respondents may have had with regard to being surveyed. In addition, our consultants accompanied the teams whenever possible to conduct spot checks and ensure high quality of the data collected.

### **2.3 Quantitative survey for local employers**

In order to more fully understand the range of available livelihood and income-generating options for refugees and refugees with disabilities in Burmese border camps in Thailand, the team interviewed local employers in the districts surrounding the selected camps in Tak and Mae Hong Son provinces.

In addition, with support from HI Country Office in Mae Sot, team members conducted interviews with representatives of the Tak Chamber of Commerce and Tak Chapter of Federation of Thai Industries in order to obtain up-to-date information and insights on the current labor demand and industry needs in the province and to identify potential areas for collaboration.

Based on the literature review and several preliminary expert interviews, agriculture was identified as the most common employment sector for refugees within the camp catchment areas (about 3 kilometers from a camp). In addition, the team conducted interviews with a number of business owners and garment factory representatives in the urban areas located close to the camps.

The main research tool used to conduct these interviews was a quantitative questionnaire (see Appendix I) developed by EMC experts and translated into Thai. The survey was administered by Thai-speaking team members with assistance from local interpreters (Karen), when needed.

### **2.4 Focus Group Discussions with people with disabilities**

Taking into consideration the specific focus of this study on refugees with disabilities, the team complemented the findings of the quantitative household survey with more in-depth qualitative findings from a number of focus group discussions (FGD).

Two FGDs were conducted in each selected camp: one for refugees with disabilities currently earning income and one for unemployed refugees with disabilities. In addition, the team conducted seven individual interviews with respondents with hearing impairments or intellectual disabilities in order to effectively accommodate individual communication needs.

For this component, the team developed an FGD guide (see Appendix II) with specific questions for both groups. The main topics of interest included barriers to employment for refugees with disabilities, both internal and external, and possible ways to overcome them, as well as existing livelihood opportunities and accessibility of support services. The FGDs and individual interviews were conducted by the team in Burmese and Karen with the assistance of camp-based HI staff.

Additional qualitative data was collected in each of the targeted camps through interviews with self-help groups (SHG) consisting of people with disabilities. Broader self-help groups, including people with many types of impairment, had been set up previously by HI in Mae La, Nu Po, and Umpiem Mai in 2009-2010. In Mae La Oon, this group did not exist, and a group of landmine survivors with similar goals but less inclusive structure was interviewed instead. The data collected were used to supplement and verify information about available livelihood options for refugees with disabilities inside and outside of the camps, as well as existing barriers to access and suggestions to overcome them.

## **2.5 Expert interviews**

In light of the recently changed political environment in Thailand, the international community has shifted its approach to Burmese refugees in the camps in Thailand towards livelihoods improvement and sustainability-focused programs. In this context, it was important for this project to collect insights from a range of experts that have been addressing various aspects of providing assistance to Burmese refugees as well as organizations that provide assistance to people with disabilities in Thailand and Myanmar.

In addition, the team's Myanmar-based consultant conducted a series of expert interviews in Yangon and Karen state to collect available information about the current livelihood situation for recently repatriated refugees and people with disabilities on the ground. In Yangon, interviews were conducted with two experts and one repatriated refugee; in Karen State, interviews were conducted with two experts, one repatriated refugee and five community leaders.

## **2.6 Challenges in data collection**

This study experienced three challenges relating to data collection. First, because of the high rate of population change in the camps, a certain percentage of households (10-12%) randomly selected to be interviewed for each camp had to be substituted. While the team, with support from camp-based HI staff, ensured that the replacement households were as similar as possible to the original choices, it is possible that the data collected from the quantitative survey is not as representative as it would otherwise be. Nevertheless, responses across all four surveyed camps were more or less consistent.

Second, because of the linguistic diversity in the camps, in some cases the team had to use one or two interpreters to communicate with the respondents. The Thai-speaking team surveying the

employers came across a similar issue in ethnic Hmong and Karen villages. While the interpreters were highly competent, there is always the chance that some information gets lost in translation.

Lastly, there were some concerns about underreporting with regard to income sources and assets of interviewed households. As mentioned above, the findings were fairly consistent across the camps, but considering recent changes in ration distribution and overall camp conditions, it is possible that these factors contributed to a more cautious approach among the refugees in terms of reporting their actual income and its sources. This concern is explained further in Section 4.2.

## 3 Literature Review

### 3.1 Research on Burmese refugees in Thailand

Burmese refugees have been crossing the border into Thailand for the past 30 years, starting in 1984, fleeing incessant fighting in Southeastern Myanmar, religious and ethnic persecution and resulting economic hardship. Over the years, multiple studies and assessments have been carried out in the border camps aimed at better understanding of this complex protracted refugee situation. Considering the rapid pace of changes in the camps' population and conditions, as well as evolving political situations in both Myanmar and Thailand, for the purposes of this study our team looked at the most recent reports on the topic, including two major assessments of refugees' socioeconomic conditions and vulnerabilities.

The overarching approach to identifying and assessing livelihood options for the refugee population is presented in the Strategic Framework for Durable Solutions (SFDS) developed by the UNHCR and CCSDPT in 2013 based on previous collaborative efforts. Overall, the document reflects the decision to reorient the programs and processes supported by the UNHCR and CCSDPT to enhance self-empowerment and capacity building of refugees during what was widely seen as an emerging transition period. A number of durable solutions is discussed in this strategy, including coordinating preparations for refugee return based on the assumption that progressing peace negotiations in Myanmar might eventually make voluntary return possible. Third-country resettlement also remained an option, along with settling in Thailand to respond to its continuous labor needs across a variety of industries. With regard to sector strategies, SFDS identified promoting self-reliance as a cornerstone of the Livelihood Sector in order to ensure that both refugees and host communities are able to effectively access livelihood opportunities to reduce dependency on external assistance (CCSDPT 2013). To achieve this goal, it was proposed to continue to develop relevant skills and support income generation activities in the camps that may lead to future stable employment, along with strengthening ties with local Thai communities and developing labor market knowledge among the refugees.

One of the most interesting and detailed assessments conducted in the refugee camps with regard to available livelihood and income generation options was conducted by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and UNHCR in Tak province in 2006. The main objective was to assess the potential for increasing self-reliance and income generation among refugees on the Thai-Myanmar border. Despite the fact that it was published eight years ago, some of the findings proved useful for this study as well, specifically with regard to challenges faced by refugees seeking employment in and out of the camps and existing informal arrangements between refugees and local employers (although the information included in the report on this topic is rather limited). The study also included relevant findings from other organizations, such as a survey on preferred occupations among the refugees conducted by Karen Refugee Committee, which found that animal and fish raising was the most preferred option, followed by sewing and weaving.

In 2009, Cardno conducted a comprehensive livelihoods and vulnerability analysis of refugee households in three camps for the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection

Department (Cardno 2009). The study employed Household Economy Approach and focused primarily on different livelihood strategies and levels of self-reliance among the refugee communities. The recommendations developed based on the collected information were primarily targeted towards revising ration distributions and food assistance programming, but also included several points on income generating options: developing small kitchen gardens to produce vegetables for sale, supporting skilled labor, petty trade and handicraft production, among others.

In 2011, The Border Consortium (TBC) commissioned a baseline livelihood vulnerability analysis to be implemented by TANGO International in all nine refugee camps along the border in which TBC provides assistance (TANGO 2011). TBC was seeking to increase efficiency of its programs and was interested in a systematic livelihood vulnerability analysis that would identify different socioeconomic groups among the beneficiaries to provide basis for better programmatic targeting. This study built in part on the Cardno research findings, but included a larger sample to achieve statistical representation for each camp and focused more on identifying which factors contributed to different levels of vulnerability among refugee households, as well as food security in the camps in general.

In 2013, UNHCR commissioned the Mae Fah Luang Foundation to conduct a general assessment of the refugee situation in all nine camps to better understand and respond to the needs of the refugees (Mae Fah Luang 2014). The study collected information from over 100,000 camp residents on their livelihood and settlement preferences, as well as their vision for life beyond refugee camps. With regard to preferred livelihood options and skills training, the study found that about 66% of the respondents received training in the camps, primarily in the area of agriculture, livestock raising, and sewing and weaving, with agriculture and livestock-related training being the main area where skills learned corresponded to desired livelihood in the future. Moreover, the study found that the respondents had strong preferences for agriculture, livestock raising, trade and business, healthcare, and general wage labor as most suitable livelihood options regardless of their future settlement plans. However, it should be noted that general wage labor seemed to be a more popular choice among those who wished to resettle to a third country, while continuing agricultural activities and livestock raising corresponded with more traditional and familiar lifestyles in both Thailand and Myanmar. As a result, the study recommends providing additional skills training in agriculture and livestock raising, as well as capital and equipment support, to help ensure food security in the first critical years after leaving the camps.

Overall, these studies provide valuable insights into the complex coping strategies of refugees to respond to their challenging socioeconomic environments. However, they only look at the general population and are not necessarily inclusive of particularly marginalized groups, such as refugees with disabilities. As a result, recommendations developed based on this research have limited applicability for refugees with disabilities, as they face unique challenges and vulnerabilities that often need to be addressed separately and require tailored solutions.

In addition to assessments conducted in the camps, several more general studies on Burmese refugees in Thailand have been published in the recent years that highlight the complexity and



uncertainty of their current situation in Thailand and areas for improvement. One of the most notable examples is a report published by Human Rights Watch in 2012, which is highly critical of the Royal Thai Government (RTG) policies toward Thailand's refugee population and provides a comprehensive set of recommendations for the RTG (HRW 2012). However, to date almost none of them have been implemented.

Another interesting report that provides an overview of the situation in Southeastern Myanmar was published by TBC in 2013 following an assessment they conducted across four states in the region (TBC 2013). The main objective was to develop village profiles in the target areas to better understand "push factors" for out-migration and internal displacement, as well as evaluate their level of preparedness for potential voluntary repatriation of refugees. The study concluded that the local conditions are not yet conducive for sustainable and organized return.

Apart from these assessments and several smaller studies, there is currently very limited research available on the situation of displaced populations in Myanmar and little information has yet been collected on repatriated refugees.

### **3.2 Livelihoods for people with disabilities**

Another literature review focus for this project was to understand the best practices in developing sustainable livelihoods for people with disabilities, especially in the Asia-Pacific region. Handicap International, as one of the leading international organizations that provides support to people with disabilities all over the world, has extensive experience in developing solutions to improve access to livelihoods for their target group, as well as conducting needs assessments and tailoring their services accordingly. For this study, our team looked at the most relevant regional projects of similar nature conducted by HI in Lao PDR, Vietnam, Kyrgyzstan, and the Philippines in order to support development of recommendations and draw on accumulated best practices in the field.

In 2011, Handicap International began a study in the Philippines covering an analysis of the current economic trends and patterns in the country and the needs and demands of people with disabilities and persons with cardio-vascular diseases. The result was suggested operational strategies and concrete recommendations for developing livelihood projects (HI 2011).

The study found that local associations had limited capacities to reach out to the most vulnerable and propose simple and available solutions and that differing economic and social circumstances of people with disabilities call for a personalized approach to social work and livelihood projects. Recommendations called for livelihoods projects to: "provide specific personalized support to persons with disabilities to upgrade their abilities to compete in the mainstream economy; mobilize the mainstream services/programs/organizations to improve full access and participation of persons with disabilities to the services; support the creation of economic activities, including through social preparation and coaching; improving the sustainability and profitability of existing business/economic activities; and facilitate access to capital including organizational development of inclusive entrepreneurs' groups and adaptations of MFI services." Despite a focus on personalized services, the recommendations also included the group approach, suggesting that HI "engage and train Disabled People's Organizations (DPOs) to reach out persons with disabilities

and empower them through peer support and group counseling: setting their own agendas, providing life skills, building self-confidence, solving problems and developing self-reliance.”

As part of the project “Decent Work and Social Protection for People with Disabilities” in Vietnam, Handicap International conducted a study in 2012 to identify the gaps between the needs of people with disabilities in terms of employment and social protection and the formal framework legislation and services and to define with partners some community based actions to address these gaps (HIb 2012). The study found that people with disabilities in the surveyed region had limited opportunities to participate in available training courses due to mobility barriers, accessibility barriers such as courses not appropriate for functional ability, wheelchair accessibility, and communications barriers resulting from hearing and visual impairment, as well a lack of self-confidence including discouragement from family. Lack of information about available trainings was also found to be a major issue. Self-employment was found to be the preferred choice of the people with disabilities interviewed in that region, although the actual participation rates were fairly low. Lack of participation in self-employment was attributed to a lack of business counseling and business skills training opportunities, lack of grant programs without required savings components and acceptable payback conditions, and lack of information and support to access loans. Lack of participation in wage employment was attributed to lack of direct support (limited referral and use of employment services), lack of proactive legislative support, and lack of advocacy.

Best practices identified in the study to increase community support for trainings and employment of people with disabilities were: “informal training within small businesses, organizing companies’ production outsourcing to provide people with disabilities with mobility problems with employment at their homes, cooperatives that support self-employment of PWD, the comprehensive support provided by Disabled People Organizations, self-help microfinance schemes to access small loans without too much red tape, and financial solidarity scheme to provide small loans to PWD.”

In January 2012, Handicap International undertook a large assessment in Lao PDR that examined the current employment situation of people with disabilities between the ages of 16 and 55 years of age in seven districts of Vientiane capital (2,200 persons), surveyed vocational training and skill development opportunities and sources of start-up capital and microfinance (HIa 2012). The resulting recommendations were organized into four sections and focused on establishing peer education networks for people with disabilities, provisions of targeted vocational counseling, as well as enhancing self-employment prospects by supporting interested individuals and providing access to microfinance and small grants. With regard to wage employment, the study recommended to include advocacy programs targeted at employers and expand job placements services for people with disabilities into other provinces.

Other research on this topic published by Handicap International in 2013 focused on access to employment opportunities for people with disabilities in Kyrgyzstan (HI 2013). The main barriers to employment identified were “missing skills, lack of resources, negative attitudes, physical accessibility and labor market competition.” The survey also identified facilitators to employment,

such as: “access to a comprehensive and up to date education and skills development, access to micro finance Institutions, and the involvement of civil society and employers in the creation of positive attitudes and employment opportunities.”

As result of the data collected, this study made the following recommendations for employment service providers and vocational training institutions: “mainstream disability into the development of projects, knowledge exchange networks, microfinance and lifelong professional training services with the cooperation of DPOs and local disability organizations; promote personalized social support services through individual coaching for PWDs and family members to develop personal skills, build self-esteem, support the soft skill development for employability and to promote the development of self-employment opportunities; and sensitize microfinance institutions to include PWDs into their operations and consider PWD as part of their clientele.” For local employers, recommendations to increase access to livelihoods were as follows: “develop support programs to enterprises in terms of reasonable accommodation (workplace adjustments, incentives and certain benefits in case that PWD are employed); promote information and awareness-raising campaigns organized by employer groups; and provide awards to employers for efforts to improve employment opportunities.”

Based on the results of these most recent studies, it can be concluded that most of the barriers to employment faced by people with disabilities in the region are related to accessibility, whether physical or institutional. In line with previous studies, the research tools developed for this study included a series of questions aimed at collecting detailed information on not only available opportunities to refugees with disabilities, but also on external and internal barriers to access these opportunities.

## 4 Findings from the Camps

### 4.1 Demographic profile

The four camps selected for this study – Umpiem Mae, Nu Po, Mae La and Mae La Oon - share a number of important characteristics. The most notable differences are related to their geographic location and surrounding areas, such as access to land, roads, proximity to the border and provincial centers, etc. However, the majority of the findings were fairly consistent across all four camps.

For this study, demographic information was collected both through quantitative household surveys and qualitative FGDs in each camp and included a detailed disability profile for each of the 132 interviewed households surveyed and 47 individuals that participated in FGDs and individual interviews.

The average size of households in the sample was 6-7 people, and 29% had a female head of household. The average education level for the household member with the highest level of education was primary or below primary in 40% of the households. In total, 86% of households identified themselves as ethnically Karen with a few households of Muslim and mixed ethnicity.

Because the sample was designed to only include households with at least one registered member with disability, the team anticipated collecting detailed demographic information for at least one person per household. However, since the questionnaire design allowed for capturing information for more than one member with disability, the findings revealed that 56 (42%) of surveyed households had more than one member with a disability, and the total number of all people with at least one type of disability captured by the survey was 203 out of 850 people residing in these households. Of the 203 individuals:

- 123 (60%) were male;
- 108 (53%) were of working age (18-60 years old);
- 60 (29%) were children (younger than 18 years old).

The table below presents a summary of the type of disability encountered in the households.

**Table 2: Disability type and frequency among surveyed households**

Type of difficulty	Number of responses (“some difficulty”)	Number of responses (“a lot of difficulty” and “cannot do at all”)	Total number of responses (% of 850 people)
Walking/climbing steps	22	95	139 (16%)
Self-care	38	58	96 (11%)
Remembering/concentrating	18	68	86 (10%)
Seeing	29	47	76 (9%)

Communicating	10	42	52 (6%)
Hearing	8	37	45 (5%)

The participants for FGD were purposefully selected to equally represent both employed and unemployed refugees with disabilities in each camp, as well as represent the spectrum of disability and maintain gender balance as much as possible. The average age of the participants was 43 years, and 42% of them were female. The majority was Karen (72%) with primary education or below (77%<sup>5</sup>).

**Table 3: Disability type and frequency among FGD participants**

Type of difficulty	Number of responses (“some difficulty”)	Number of responses (“a lot of difficulty” and “cannot do at all”)	Total number of responses (% of 47 people)
Walking/climbing stairs	21	13	34 (72%)
Remembering/concentrating	19	2	21 (45%)
Seeing	9	8	17 (36%)
Communicating	5	5	10 (21%)
Self-care (washing, dressing, etc.)	9	1	10 (21%)
Hearing	4	4	8 (17%)

Similarly to the household data, one person could report more than one type of difficulty, resulting in the total number of responses that exceeds that total number of participants (47).

## 4.2 Current income generating and livelihood options

One of the most important objectives of this study was to gain a better understanding of what livelihoods and income-generating options are currently available for refugees with disabilities both inside and outside of the surveyed camps. This information was collected both through quantitative household surveys to understand the variety of income-generating activities practiced by households with members with disability and through qualitative in-depth

<sup>5</sup> Lower educational level of FGD participants may be partially explained by the different methodology used to collect this information for households, where we were asking for the highest level of education for anyone in the household, versus FGDs, where we were collecting information specifically for individuals with disabilities. As a result of the methodological differences, these findings should not be used to draw any comparisons.

discussions with FGD participants, as well as with Self-help Groups and Camp Committee representatives to assess accessibility of existing livelihoods to refugees with disabilities.

When asked about the number of home-based businesses in each camp, Camp Committee members estimated 5-10% of all households in the surveyed camps (to the best of their knowledge). This estimate includes both trade and services, although trade is reportedly a much more prominent business in the camps and the demand for services (hairdressing, motorbike repairs, etc.) is relatively limited.

The quantitative survey findings indicate that 75% of all surveyed households in four camps have had some kind of cash income in the past six months, which includes both income from work and remittances:

- 65% of households have had income from work;
- 11% have received only remittances;
- and 16% of households have received both.

Over the previous six months, the average monthly income was 1,310 Baht<sup>6</sup>. However, it is important to note that the period surveyed covered the high agricultural season, since October and November are harvest months. In fact, casual agricultural labor outside of camps was reported as the most common source of income for households with members with disabilities – this response was selected by 38% of all interviewed households<sup>7</sup>. There are various arrangements that are made in the surveyed camps with regard to working for local farmers in the surrounding area: while some farmers make direct arrangements with the Camp Commanders to hire a certain number of workers per day (up to 500 during high agricultural season) and secure temporary permits, some refugees reach out to the farmers on their own and go to work either individually or in groups.

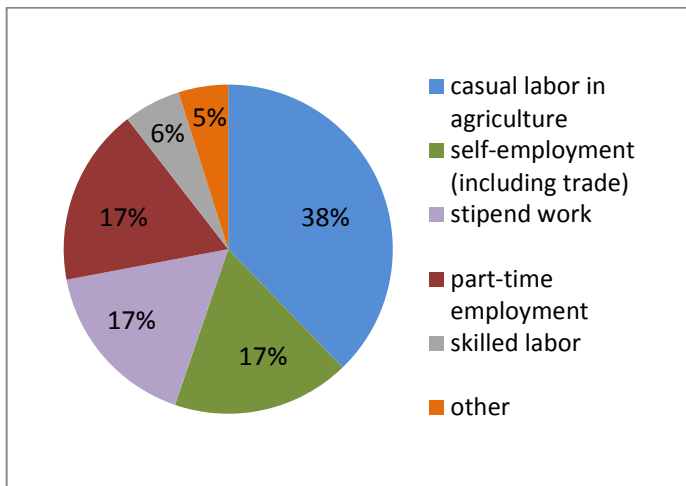
The next three prominent sources of income, at 17% each, were self-employment, which included petty trade, stipend work for camp-based NGOs and other part-time employment. Overall, refugee households included in this study, tend to engage in petty trade selling small items, vegetables and other food items from own production. There were no reported shopkeepers in our household sample. Only a few households reported owning productive assets, such as woodworking tools or a sewing machine.

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<sup>6</sup>It was challenging for some respondents to estimate their total income per month over the last six months; as a result, some gave daily wages, other estimate their total income over the indicated period. During the data analysis, our team took all of these differences into consideration and estimated monthly averages for every household with reported income in order to calculate the overall average income per month.

<sup>7</sup> Interestingly, livestock raising was consistently reported separately from agricultural labor and included in the “Other” category.

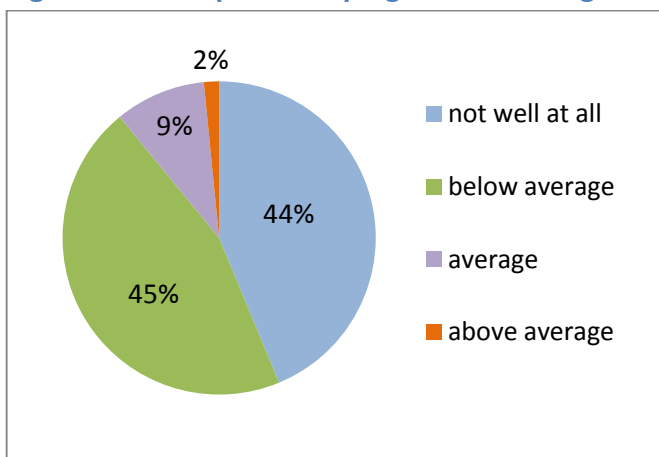
**Figure 1: Most common sources of income for refugee households with members with disabilities (excluding remittances)**



Note: more than one answer per household was possible; percentages represent the total number of times each answer was selected.

When asked about their perceived levels of coping, the majority of households indicated that they were coping either below average or not well at all (89% of all households in total). Interestingly, there seems to be no direct correlation between the average monthly income and the coping levels; specifically, 89% of households include both households with relatively high and low monthly income, if compared to the average. The only camp with slightly higher reported levels was Mae La Oon, where 30% of households claimed to have average coping levels, including the only two households in the entire sample that perceived their economic situation to be “above average”. However, it should be pointed out that coping level is complex notion and may refer to all the support services and activities available in the camps, not just direct income generation.

**Figure 2: Self-reported coping levels of refugee households with members with disabilities**



Among the FGD participants, which were purposefully selected to represent currently employed and unemployed refugees with disabilities, the most popular employment options were petty trade and casual labor in agriculture. Average monthly individual income for FGD participants was 1,470 Baht over the previous six months. Of those who were unemployed, 40% were not looking



for a job because they felt unable to work. The remaining respondents were either actively looking or participating in vocational training at the moment.

While the results are fairly consistent from camp to camp, there are some concerns about underreporting, especially if we attempt to triangulate the information between sources. Specifically, the percentage of households engaged in casual agricultural labor (38%) is lower than the estimates provided by the Camp Committee members (up to 70%). There are, of course, several factors that may explain this discrepancy; for example, our sample only included households with members with disabilities, who may, indeed, engage less in casual agricultural labor if compared to general camp population. Nevertheless, taking into consideration the general context of instability and previous concerns over similar surveys, it is possible that some income-generating activities, as well as assets, were underreported. Another example of this is selling part of household rations to generate additional income. In some of the previous studies on this subject, up to 20% of households admitted to selling rations on a regular basis (for example, Cardo 2009), while in our study only one household reported this activity. The difference in results may be partially attributed to the changes in ration distribution and overall camp conditions that took place during the time in between the two studies; at the same time, those factors may have also contributed to a more cautious approach among the refugees in terms of reporting their actual income and its sources.

### 4.3 Existing skills and participation in the training courses offered in the camps

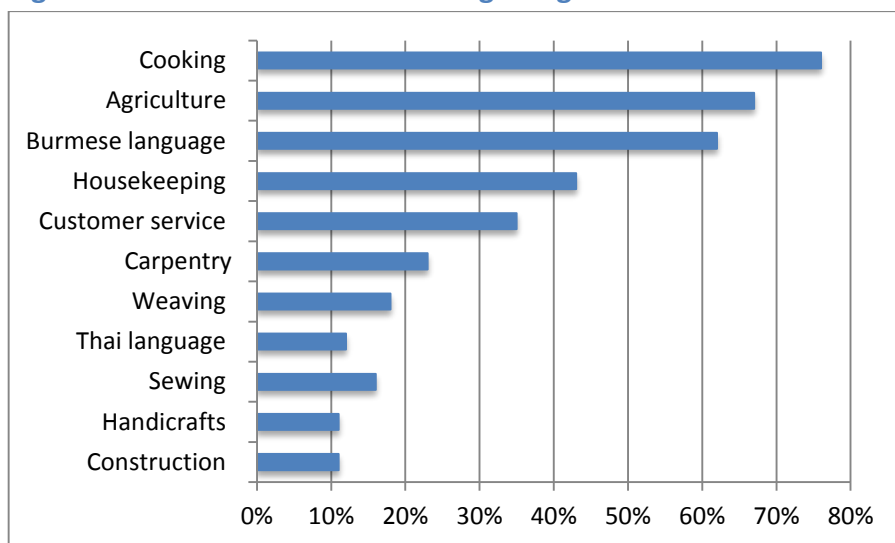
According to the survey results, 25% of the interviewed households have at least one member that has taken a vocational training course. The range of courses offered in each camp varies greatly: from sewing to fish raising to haircutting, and it is not uncommon for one household to have attended several different courses (in our sample, members of 14 households have taken more than one training course). However, **only a quarter of households that have received vocational training have been able to use these skills to generate income.** Moreover, 68% of interviewed households believe that they need additional training to pursue their desired livelihood options, while only 17% consider vocational training to be currently available to them. **Overall, there seems to be a significant interest in vocational training, but a lack of clarity on its availability.**

There may be a number of reasons that could explain this variance, but there were certainly some accessibility challenges for refugees with disabilities that have been reported during our discussions. Specifically, the length of some courses makes it difficult for refugees with disabilities to attend regularly, especially if there are distances involved. As a result, they tend to drop out before finishing the course. In addition, some FGD participants believed that they needed a certain minimum level of education to be able to enroll.

Unsurprisingly, the most prevalent skill among the surveyed household members is cooking, albeit at different proficiency levels: while some refugees have taken advance cooking and baking classes offered in the camps, others reported basic skills used on a daily basis in each household. Agricultural skills are another prominent skill set, consistent with the finding that casual

agricultural labor remains the most popular source of income in the camps, as well as with predominantly agricultural background of the general refugee population.

**Figure 3: Most common skills among refugee households with members with disabilities**



Note: more than one answer per household was possible.

#### 4.4 Preferred livelihood options

While 64% of all surveyed households had been engaged in agriculture before they migrated to Thailand, only 42% see agricultural labor as the most preferred option for the future (which is still by far the most common preference). Of the remaining households, 21% would like to switch to the trade business, while another 20% would prefer to do something else entirely, which includes various occupations, as well as livestock raising (which is again separated from agricultural labor by the respondents).

Participants in the FGDs discussed their preferred livelihood options in detail, revealing that livestock raising and petty trade are the most desirable occupations for refugees with disabilities specifically, mainly because both can be done from home. Stipend work, although a significant source of employment for refugees in the camps, was not considered as desirable mainly due to self-assessed lack of education.

**Table 4: Desirability and accessibility of existing livelihood options for refugees with disabilities (from FGDs)**

Livelihood	Accessibility	Desirability <sup>8</sup>
Livestock raising	Many people with disabilities saw raising livestock as a preferred livelihood option, mainly due to the fact that this activity can be performed close to home	High (30%)
Petty trade	Petty trade was also a popular option due to a perceived lack a risk and the ability to conduct business from home	High (30%)

<sup>8</sup> Represents the percentage of FGD participants who mentioned this option as a preferred livelihood.

Agriculture	Depending on the nature of the impairment, work outside of the camps is not as accessible to people with disabilities as to other refugees due to daily travel requirements	Medium (12%)
Casual labor	Depending on the nature of the impairment, many people with disabilities reported being unable to undertake casual labor on a regular basis due to its physically demanding nature	Low (2%)
Stipend work (camp staff) <sup>9</sup>	While a common source of employment opportunities for the general population, this activity was not seen by FGD participants as an option due to perceived education and language barriers	Low (0%)

## 4.5 Barriers to livelihood and income generating options for refugees with disabilities

### 4.5.1 Access to capital

Access to land was not the main barrier to income generating for refugees with disabilities, based on the qualitative discussions in each camp. While 9% of FGD participants reported access to land as a barrier, 55% indicated that access to start-up capital remains the main barrier for them. This was also confirmed during discussions with self-help groups.

Although no microfinance institutions currently operate inside of the camps, there are some grant, loan, and rent-to-own options available to camp residents through organizations such as The Border Consortium (TBC) and American Refugee Committee (ARC). These programs were each found to have their own particular barriers, though, for this population, including a lack of knowledge within the disabled population of their existence. In most cases, loans for start-up capital were only available to members of village savings and loan projects, which operate as small groups. Joining these groups requires a certain amount of social capital and a certain amount of steady income to build the required savings, two things the disabled refugee population often lacks compared to the general camp population.

Similarly, rent-to-own programs meant to give people access to the equipment necessary for their livelihoods are available in some camps through ARC but require the participant to also be a part of the organization's village savings and loan program.

Small grants given out by organizations are also a path to start-up capital, and probably the most accessible to the disabled population at this time. Like other available opportunities, though,

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<sup>9</sup> Additional analysis was conducted on the data obtained from the household survey with regard to identifying a potential correlation of refugees' UNHCR registration status and their engagement in camp administration and other stipend work with NGOs in the camps. However, in our sample, no clear trend was identified as refugee households who had at least one member doing stipend work came to the camps both before and after the cessation of UNHCR registrations in 2005: the answers included "before 1986", "between 1986 and 2005" and "after 2005".

neither the existence of nor the process for obtaining a grant was commonly known in the population surveyed. The relatively small size of the grants as compared to the loans also was reported by focus group participants to limit the size of business that can be created.

It was also found that this lack of start-up capital or perceived lack of start-up capital has a significant effect on the attitudes of the respondents regarding training opportunities. Numerous focus group participants said that they were uninterested in attending a skills training specifically because they did not have access to the start-up capital necessary to turn that skill into a livelihood. This is supported by the finding highlighted earlier that only a quarter of training recipients have been able to use the skills acquired to earn income.

#### **4.5.2 Access to land**

Availability and accessibility of livelihood options varies by camp, especially with regard to access to land, which greatly impacts agriculture-related livelihoods. This barrier was discussed in two different forms. Regarding agriculture, members of the population surveyed mentioned that they were unable to take advantage of programs that provide temporary access to land outside of the camps to camp residents for farming due to the distance to those sites. Regarding livestock, focus group participants from three of the camps (Mae La, Mae La Oon, and Umpiem Mae) said that lack of space within the camps to raise livestock was a barrier for that desired livelihood.

#### **4.5.3 Internal barriers**

When asked about internal barriers to finding employment, the most common response from people with disabilities was a lack of confidence (29% of focus group participants). This lack of confidence was commonly reported as stemming from two things: fear that the individual would be rejected by employers and fear that the individual would not be able to accomplish the task that they were employed to do. It is suspected that this lack of confidence, especially regarding education level, may be preventing people with disabilities from attempting to gain stipend work with the various organizations in the camps. All four of the self-help groups that were interviewed mentioned lack of education as a barrier to people with disabilities finding stipend work in the camps.

#### **4.5.4 Other barriers**

Only 4% of the focus group participants reported that lack of skills was a major internal barrier to their desired work. This could be due to the preference for retail- and livestock-related livelihood options within this group, a lack of interest in current training options, or a lack of self-confidence to believe that they could attain a livelihood requiring special training. It is also possible that lack of skills is a bigger barrier than participants fully appreciate.

Though not explicitly mentioned by focus group participants, it was apparent that lack of information was a major external barrier to this population finding employment. Many focus group participants did not know about existing services such as training or access to capital that could directly address many of the issues that were commonly mentioned. It is also suspected that many people with disabilities living in the camps may not be hearing about job opportunities for stipend work with organizations. These announcements are usually listed on bulletin boards

and passed on through section leaders in the camps, which is likely less effective in a population that faces mobility, communication, and social exclusion issues.

## 5 Employers around the Camps

### 5.1 General context

While the majority of the labor force in the Thai provinces on the border with Myanmar consists of Burmese migrant workers, both documented and undocumented, the official policy of the Royal Thai Government still prohibits any employment of the Burmese refugees outside of the camps. However, the actual situation in the surveyed provinces – Tak and Mae Hong Son – is much more complex. According to the Tak Provincial Office of Labor, in September 2014 there were 31,531 undocumented migrant workers in the province and 99.9% of them were from Myanmar. It is difficult to estimate what proportion of this number were economic migrants as opposed to refugees from the border camps.

Moreover, there is a shortage of labor across all sectors in the surveyed provinces, including agriculture and manufacturing. This is primarily due to unwillingness of local people to engage in 3D jobs (“difficult, demeaning and dangerous”), especially in agriculture, and migration to Bangkok for higher wages and better working conditions, which is a factor for both local and migrant workers. In 2014, the Tak Provincial Office of Labor estimated the labor demand across all sectors at 21,680 workers. The demand for skilled workers is the highest - it accounts for 40% of the total, and the demand for unskilled workers is 21.4%. The construction sector suffers from the highest labor shortages – 37.5% of the total number, followed by garment industry, wholesale and retail trade, and services. However, according to the Tak Provincial Federation of Thai Industries, the real demand for labor is even higher.

In Mae Hong Son province, the highest demand for labor is in the agricultural sector (58.3% of the total labor demand), especially during the harvesting season (October-November). Unlike in Tak province, the majority of workers are local, with only a small number of migrant workers. This is partly explained by the fact that the wages in Mae Hong Son are lower than in Tak, which leads to more migrant workers migrating to Tak and then to other destinations in Thailand with more attractive conditions.

As a result, industry representatives in both provinces are highly interested in using labor supply from the camps to fill the current gaps. For example, the Tak Provincial Federation for Thai Industries (FTI) indicated a possibility of bringing employment opportunities inside the camps (garment manufacturing). However, current government policies, as well as lack of infrastructure in the surrounding areas prevent employers from accessing labor resources in the camps. In fact, FTI has tried this approach in collaboration with the International Rescue Committee, but the garment factory established in Umpiem Mae could not operate effectively because of the barriers that have yet to be overcome.

With regard to employing people with disabilities, the Thai Labor legislation contains a provision to encourage businesses to employ people with disabilities and includes financial incentives for each person with a disability hired per 100 workers, particularly for the agricultural and construction sectors. In practice, however, both sectors are physically demanding and are arguably not the best fit for people with disabilities (although this depends on the nature and

severity of disability in each case). Nevertheless, there are occupations within each sector that are less demanding, such as preparing materials, as well as opportunities in the services sector that are suitable for people with disability. One of the garment factories' managers interviewed for this study thought that the garment sector is flexible enough to accommodate people with disabilities and mentioned that he would be interested in collaborating with the government and relevant NGOs to provide employment opportunities to people with disabilities.

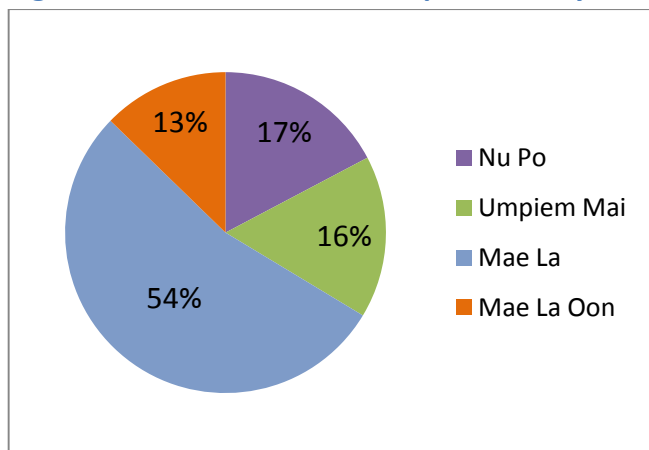
One of the most important conditions in realizing these plans, according to the interviewed experts, is the development of clear government policies to allow employment of refugees while providing sufficient guarantees that workers would stay with their employers for a certain period of time in order to reduce losses from high employee turnover currently experienced by local industries.

## 5.2 Employer profile

In addition to the high-level expert interviews summarized above, our team conducted a quantitative survey with 109 individual employers in the areas surrounding the four selected camps in both provinces.

The majority of the respondents were Thai, although our team came across ethnic Karen villages as well. In total, 54% of respondents were located around Mae La camp, with 23% of respondents located within 5km from the nearest camp.

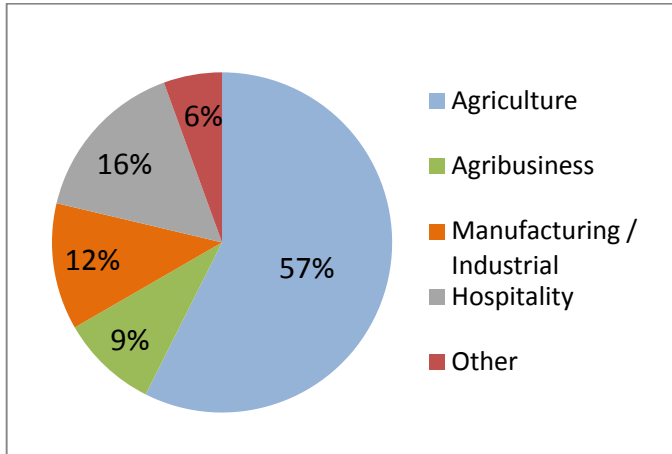
**Figure 4: Distribution of the respondents by the nearest camp**



As expected, agriculture was the dominant sector in the surveyed areas and included 57% of all surveyed employers, with hospitality being the next most prominent industry (16%). With regard to geographic variation, our team found that the areas around Mae Sot had the highest concentration of trade and manufacturing businesses, while in Umphang hospitality was the main industry. The main agricultural crops in the surveyed areas were corn, rice and cabbage.



**Figure 5: Main business activity among the surveyed employers**



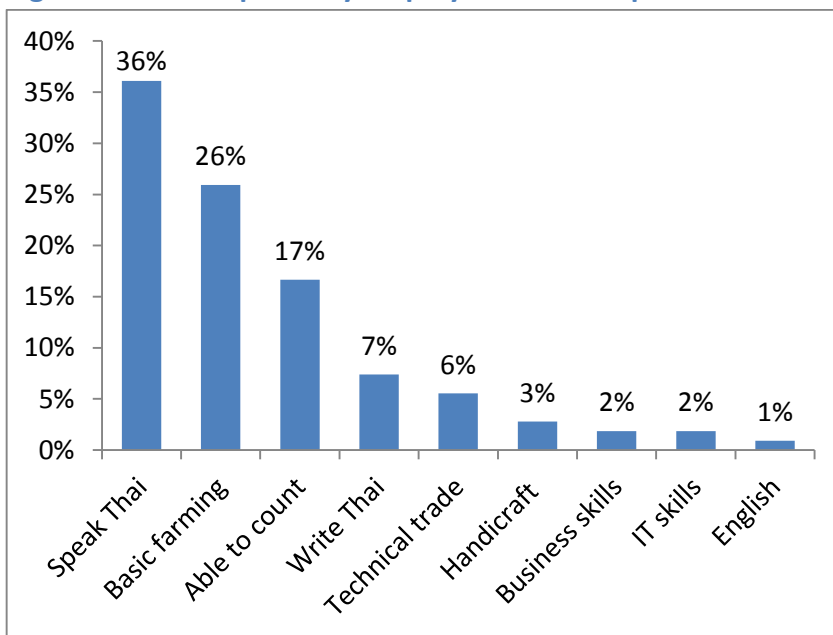
### 5.3 Employers' education and skill requirements

A key finding from the employer survey is that the education and skills requirements for most positions are relatively low. This is perhaps not surprising, given that most of the employment near the camps is in low-skilled agriculture, hospitality and manufacturing.

An overwhelming 94% of respondents indicated that they require no education or some primary education for most of their positions.

In terms of minimum skills required for most positions, the most common responses were the ability to speak and understand Thai language (36%) and basic farming skills (26%). More sophisticated skills, such as technical trade, handicrafts, business skills and IT skills were in relatively low demand.

**Figure 6: Skills required by employers for most positions**



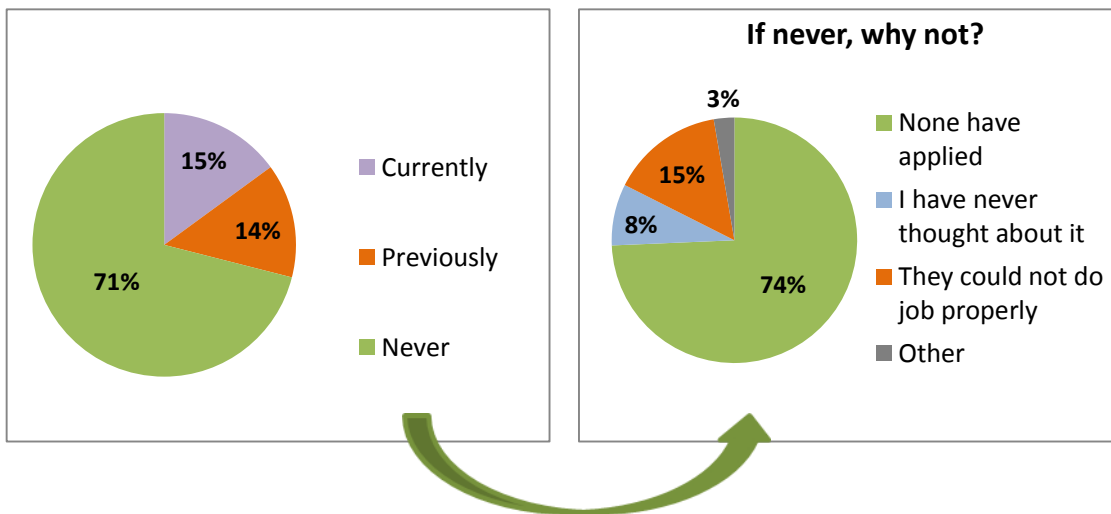
This finding suggests that lack of education and skills may not be a major barrier to refugees finding work outside the camps. This is discussed further in the sections below.

One of the main objectives of this study was to assess what opportunities are available for refugees with disabilities outside of the camps. For this purpose, the employers were asked a series of questions to assess their experience with hiring refugees and people with disabilities separately, as well as refugees with disabilities specifically.

#### 5.4 Hiring people with disabilities

According to the findings, 29% of respondents either currently hire or have previously hired people with disabilities. And of those employers who have never hired a person with a disability, the prevailing reason cited was that “none have applied.”

**Figure 7: Have you previously employed or are you currently employing a person with a disability?**



Nevertheless, 34% of respondents would be prepared to hire people with disabilities in the future. The most commonly cited reason to hire people with disabilities was the desire to support them in their communities – 68% of all responses. At the same time, the most common factor that would prevent employers from hiring people with disabilities - 42% said they would not be prepared to hire a person with a disability in the future - is their perception that people with disabilities would not be able to do the required work in their businesses (49%), followed by “I don’t know what sort of work they are able to do” (34%).

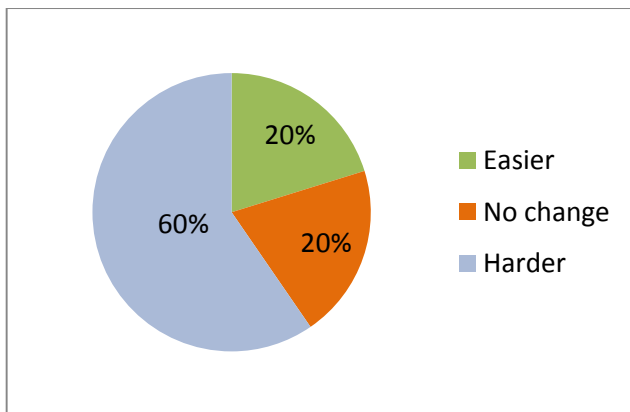
Another interesting finding is that, while information from the camps suggests that those people with disabilities who engage in casual labor outside are sometimes paid less (according to Camp Committees’ estimates), employers, on the other hand, claim to pay extra to their workers with disabilities – up 50 Baht per day more on average and sometimes provide help with medical fees (however, workers with disabilities in this case are not necessarily refugees). Overall, the reported daily wages paid to migrant workers for agricultural labor are fairly consistent with the information obtained from Camp Committee interviews: 150-200 Baht per day during the high season.

## 5.5 Hiring migrant workers and refugees

Many of the surveyed respondents have experience with hiring both refugees and migrant workers: 57% have hired refugees, while 60% have hired migrants. Based on the literature review and expert interviews conducted prior to the fieldwork, our team expected lack of clarity in definitions between migrant workers and refugees, especially considering overall lack of documentation for both groups; however, most of the respondents seem to be aware of the status of their employees, at least to some extent. 70% said that refugees and migrants they hire usually have no work documents, 18% have short-term permits from camp authorities and 9% have 1-year work permit from the local government.

Around 60% of respondents believed it has become harder to hire refugees or migrants over the past 12 months. This response is most likely related to an increase in political and regulatory difficulties associated with hiring migrants or refugees. It could also reflect a perception by employers that labor shortages in the region have grown worse, as migrant workers move to other areas of Thailand in search of higher wages.

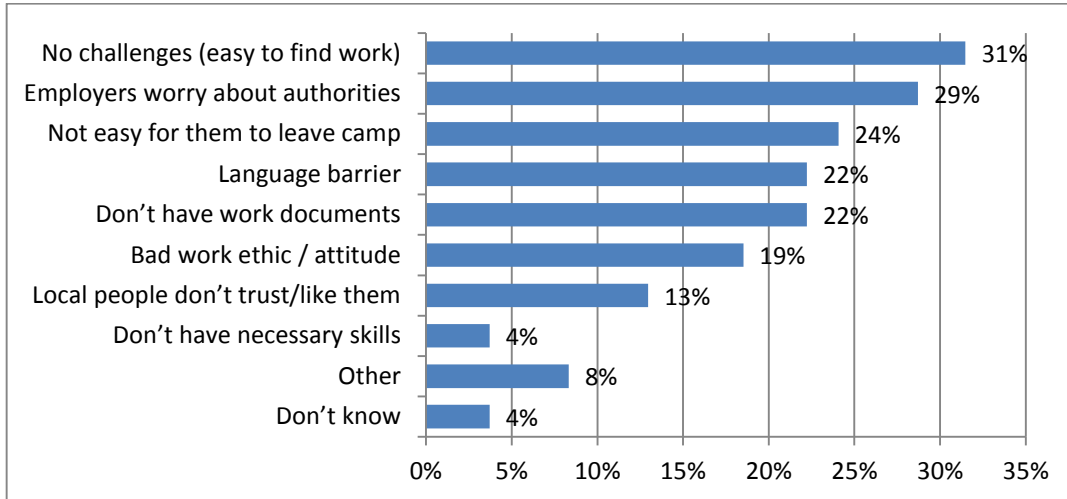
**Figure 8: In past year, has it become easier or harder to hire refugees and migrants?**



The most common type of work for which refugees and migrant workers are hired is low-skilled agricultural labor (63% of employers hire them), followed by low-skilled manual labor in construction and the manufacturing industry (17%).

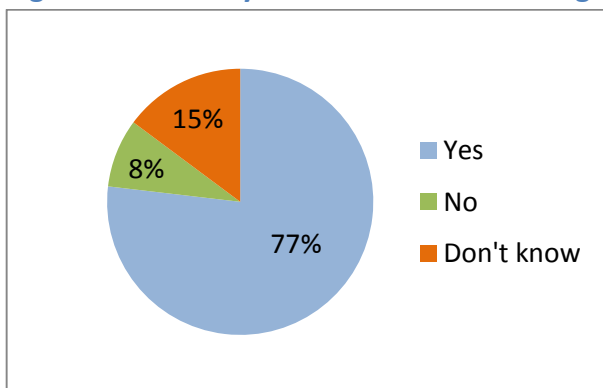
The team also asked for employers' opinion on the main barriers for refugees to finding work in the area and received a range of answers. Interestingly, around one third of employers believed that there were, in fact, no barriers. Most of the barriers commonly cited relate to the current ambiguous situation with regard to refugee employment outside of the camps. Only 4% of respondents indicated that lack of skills was a barrier to employment of refugees.

**Figure 9: Barriers to employment for refugees**



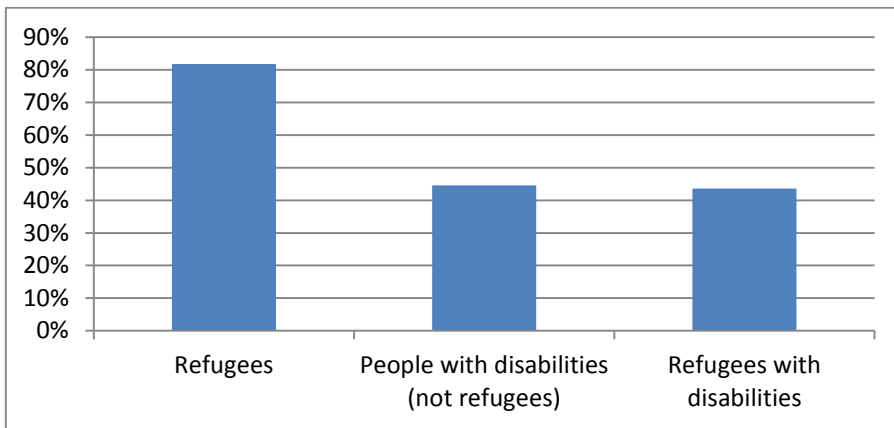
When asked if employers would be interested in hiring refugees provided there was official government permission, the majority expressed their interest in doing so – 77%, which is consistent with high interest in engaging labor resources in the camps highlighted in the expert interviews.

**Figure 10: Would you be interested in hiring refugees if it could be done officially?**



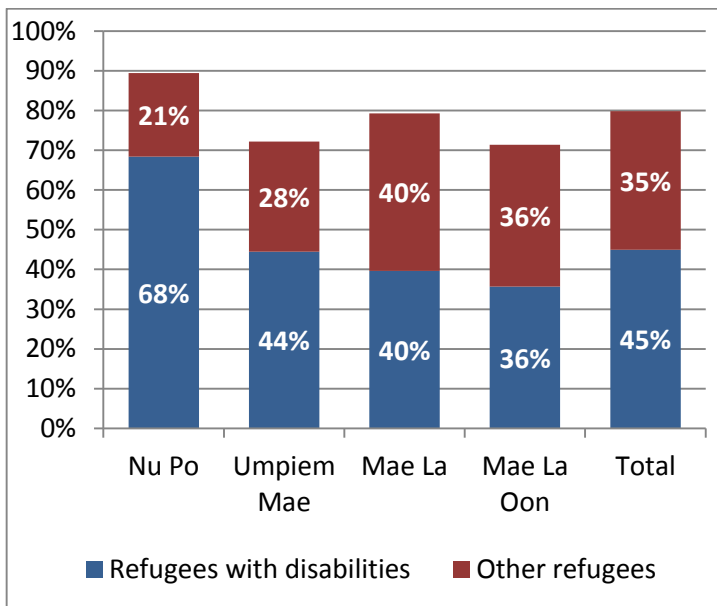
Moreover, 82% of respondents indicated a willingness to work with Handicap International and other organizations to provide employment for refugees, although only half of that number were specifically interested in employing refugees with disabilities. However, it should be kept in mind that this question was asked directly without any preparatory work on awareness raising about disability or possible arrangements that could be made to accommodate workers with disabilities.

**Figure 11: Would you be interested in partnering with Handicap International to provide employment opportunities for:**

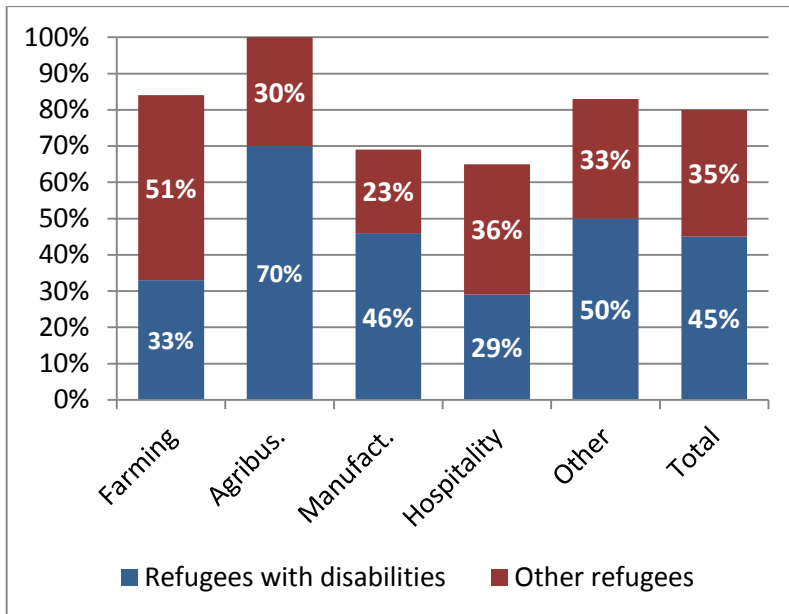


The graph above shows that around 45% of businesses are willing to partner with HI and other organizations to employ refugees with disabilities, with another 35% willing to partner for refugees without disabilities. There is also some variation between the four surveyed camp areas, as well as across different industries with agribusiness being the most interested:

**Figure 12: Interest in partnering to provide employment for refugees and refugees with disabilities per camp area**



**Figure 13: Interest in partnering to provide employment for refugees and refugees with disabilities across industries**



## 5.6 Conclusion

Most available employment in the surveyed area in Tak and Mae Hong Son provinces is low-skilled, manual labor in agricultural, construction and manufacturing industries. This is consistent for all types of workers, whether migrants, refugees or locals. Consequently, refugees with disabilities are not constrained in finding employment outside the camps by a lack of education or skills, but rather by the regulatory difficulties associated with working outside the camps as well as the physically demanding nature of much of the work.

Nevertheless, anecdotal evidence from the surveyed camps suggests that refugees with disabilities are able to participate in casual labor outside of the camps along with the other refugees, depending on the type and severity of the impairment. Moreover, nearly a third of employers have employed at least one person with a disability, according to the findings of this study.

Encouragingly, a substantial number of employers expressed a willingness to partner with Handicap International and other relevant organizations to provide employment opportunities for refugees with disabilities. However, this collaboration would require significant support from the partner organization.

## 6 Livelihood Opportunities and Labor Demand in Myanmar

### 6.1 Findings from literature review

Collecting accurate information with regard to current and future labor demand in Myanmar remains a distinct challenge for the international community. In addition to severe lack of accurate baseline data on employment even on the national level, the constantly changing political situation in the country makes predictions and estimates less than reliable. The situation becomes even more complicated on the sub-national level, particularly in the areas with sporadically resuming armed conflict, such as Southeastern Myanmar. This is particularly important for developing policies and livelihood support programs for Burmese refugees in the border camps in the general context of potential voluntary repatriation.

Most recently, several attempts have been made to identify industry sectors that are most likely to have high labor demand in the near future that would drive Myanmar's economic growth. In 2013, the McKinsey Global Institute released a comprehensive report on the unique opportunities and challenges faced by Myanmar's industries to assess the economic potential of the country in the near future. This analysis, drawing on an extensive range of Burmese and international expert interviews and secondary data sources, suggested that agriculture, manufacturing, energy and mining sectors will be the main drivers of the Myanmar economy and together should account for almost 85% of the total "economic opportunity", with manufacturing overcoming agriculture as the main income generating industry by 2030.

The report goes on to highlight that the Myanmar labor force is significantly behind other ASEAN countries in terms of productivity, but then points to the advantage of having a significant number of semi-skilled migrant workers who could potentially return, if the conditions permit. Based on this assumption, the report proposes to take advantage of the useful skills developed by these migrants in the growing sectors, especially manufacturing. Although possible voluntary repatriation of refugees is not explicitly mentioned in the report, it is possible to suggest that the same principle would apply to those refugees who have developed certain skills in agriculture and manufacturing industries in Thailand.

The Asian Development Bank supports this assessment in its 2014 Country Diagnostic report, which states that increasing agricultural productivity will be vital for economic growth in the short term, followed by increasing the prominence of the manufacturing sector. These two sectors, along with tourism, will create the majority of jobs in both urban and rural areas. At the same time, a lot remains to be done to increase the productivity and skills base of the workers in these industries, particularly along agricultural value chains. The report also recommends taking advantages of returning migrant workers' skills and experience in more productive overseas industries.

Both reports, however, only provide a high level picture of labor market potential in Myanmar. A more detailed study was conducted by the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) in 2013 to collect information on employment opportunities to inform vocational training design in the border camps to complement the training needs analysis conducted by ADRA among refugees

in 2011. The 2013 study included fieldwork in Karen state and a compilation of recommendations from the previous studies on the subject.

In summary, the most in-demand skills across surveyed businesses were sales and management, followed by basic accounting, driving, computer skills and housekeeping. Soft skills were also highlighted by the employers, especially with regard to behavior and work ethics. In terms of industry-specific skills, the following were found to be in demand:

- Sewing and garment manufacturing are expected to create job opportunities in Myanmar in the near future; moreover, there is currently a shortage of skilled labor in existing garment factories.
- Cooking and baking, the demand for which will come from the hospitality industry that is rapidly developing in the country; however, the skills needed to secure these jobs are more advanced and require knowledge of international cuisine as well.
- Services, such as massage, haircutting and mechanical repairs, are likely to be in demand in all surveyed locations.

The report also provides a brief overview of several more occupations and goes on to recommend training design for the camp population based on these findings. This is consistent with ADRA's mission to provide training to refugees targeted at generating income back in Myanmar after voluntary repatriation takes place.

### **6.1.1 Economy of Karen state**

Unsurprisingly, information on main economic activities in Karen state is even scarcer than for Myanmar in general. However, both UNHCR and TBC attempted to conduct a situational analysis of the state's economy in the last few years in order to better understand current livelihood opportunities for state residents and internally displaced people alike. While a thorough analysis of potential livelihood opportunities for returning refugees is yet to be conducted, these reports provide some valuable insights on the most common available occupations.

Specifically, the most recent UNHCR's Karen State Profile from June 2014 highlights the continuous importance of agriculture as the main livelihood for the majority of the state's population, with major crops being rice, rubber, coffee, and fruits and vegetables (UNHCR 2014). According to the report, both government sources and Karen National Union (KNU) confirmed that agriculture and livestock raising are still the main source of income for the vast majority of the state's residents, although the security of these livelihood activities has been considerably undermined by continuous instability and ongoing conflict. The report also points out the differences in the state's topography that result in a significant variation in agricultural potential across the state, with such viable cash crops as coffee and cardamom grown in the North, while the South has more arable land. In addition, there are rubber and sugarcane plantations being developed and are expected to gain prominence as the security situation improves. However, access to livelihood opportunities and general economic development in Karen state continues to be constrained by extremely underdeveloped infrastructure, which is exacerbated by ongoing lack of security.



TBC has been conducting surveys on internal displacement in the Southeast of Myanmar, including Karen state, since 2002. The most recent report from 2013 includes a section on livelihoods and food security in the region and, like the UNHCR report mentioned above, highlights the importance of subsistence agriculture as the main source of livelihoods (TBC 2013). However, food security in the region is threatened not only by the ongoing conflict, but also by natural hazards such as floods, unseasonal rains, and pests.

In addition to the ongoing importance of the agriculture sector, the manufacturing industry is predicted to gain prominence in the near future, which is of course contingent upon further improvements in the state security situation. Specifically, in light of recent infrastructure developments, most notably the Asia Highway, manufacturing is expected to eventually become a major industry in Karen state. According to the same UNHCR report, a number of NGOs have plans to launch or expand existing livelihood programs to help the local population prepare for this change, but these attempts are still modest (UNHCR 2014).

Nevertheless, the Karen state government has recognized the economic potential in establishing stronger ties with Thailand and decided to create an Industrial Zone (IZ) in the border town of Myawaddy in order to create employment opportunities for the state's residents and respond to the ongoing labor demand from Thailand (Tak province and beyond). A 2014 study by Japan Development Institute examined the state of the IZ development on the Myanmar-Thailand border, which is part of the East-West Economic Corridor, and the state's efforts to attract Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), primarily from Japan (JDI 2014). The long-term goal of the project is to create 100,000 jobs for the people of Karen state and develop adequate infrastructure, including roads and stable electricity supply, in order to ensure the IZ's sustainable success. Moreover, the Myawaddy IZ is set to be promoted to a Special Economic Zone (SEZ) status as its trade relationship with Thailand grows. Another IZ is being developed in the Hpa-an area with similar objectives. It is assumed that the main industry in this region will be garment manufacturing<sup>10</sup>, which is consistent with the forecast for Myanmar in general, as described in the previous section, as well as food processing and auto parts manufacturing.

### **6.1.2 Disability in Myanmar**

With regard to better understanding views on and approaches to disability in Myanmar, limited attempts have been made in the recent years to gather information on the topic. The first government attempt at collecting national-level data was made in 2008-2009, when the Department of Social Welfare conducted the First Myanmar Basic Disability Survey<sup>11</sup>. According to the survey, 2.32% of the population had some type of disability - 1.276 million people (based on

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<sup>10</sup> One notable example of garment industry moving into Karen state is the UMH factory in Hpa-an that produces basic clothing for Japanese restaurants and hospitals and opened a sewing school as part of the project to train local people with no previous industry experience. The factory also attempts to attract migrant workers returning from Thailand to take advantage of their more developed skills. More information can be found here <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-20778610> and here <http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/business/3039-clothing-factory-opened-at-hpa-an-s-first-industrial-zone.html>

<sup>11</sup> Some results can be found on the Department's website: <http://www.dsw.gov.mm/en/rehabilitation/rehabilitation-persons-disabilities>

the estimate of the total population of 55 million at the time) with up to 66% living in the rural areas. The study also attempted to map support organizations for people with disabilities in Myanmar, which revealed a significant lack of services and limited coverage.

In 2012, a qualitative study was conducted in Yangon, Mandalay and Taunggyi to better understand existing coping mechanisms of people with disabilities and their families (Salai Vanni Bawi 2012). The study found that one of the priorities for developing services for people with disabilities in Myanmar is providing basic and advanced vocational training programs that would be available not only to people with disabilities themselves, but also to their family members, followed by job search assistance and placement. Among the main challenges to livelihood access, the study highlighted lack of organizations that would be focused on providing livelihood assistance to people with disabilities specifically, as well as lack of resources for those organizations that do attempt to provide such services. In addition, there is a considerable lack of information about and understanding of disability in Myanmar, which leaves existing actors in the field disconnected and hampers access to information for people with disabilities.

## **6.2 Expert interviews findings**

While the conclusions of the abovementioned reports are more or less consistent, our team conducted a brief data collection through expert interviews in Yangon and Hpa-An in order to gain more perspective on the current and future income generating opportunities for returning refugees and refugees with disabilities.

### **6.2.1 Repatriated refugees**

In order to gain first-hand information about experiences with establishing livelihoods upon return, our expert attempted to locate recently returned refugees in Yangon and Hpa-An. However, the data collection trip to Hpa-An was limited to the three villages, which were identified as the main source of refugees in the area two decades ago, and revealed that almost no one returned to their former homes. The village chiefs, interviewed for this study, suggested that most refugees choose to stay in the mountainous areas along the border, primarily because of continuous political instability in the state. In case of new fighting, it would be easier for them to return to the camps in Thailand.

Moreover, traveling from the border to Hpa-An and surrounding area can be quite costly, up to \$100 in some cases, which makes the journey inaccessible for a lot of returning refugees. When asked about livelihoods of those refugees who chose to stay along the border, the village chiefs suggested they practiced foraging and subsistence agriculture. And while it would undoubtedly be interesting to interview these refugees, it is currently impossible, as the area remains dangerous due to active landmines.

It is currently unclear how many refugees have actually returned to Karen state in the last several years and where they are located. It is possible to suggest that some of those who choose to stay along the border return to the camps in Thailand and are not yet settled permanently anywhere. Those who return to urban areas, such as Yangon and Hpa-An, most likely originated from urban

areas as well and have more opportunities and support network still in place upon return (based on anecdotal evidence).

### **6.2.2 Government efforts in Karen state**

The local government has made several attempts to prepare for potential voluntary repatriation in the near future. For example, with support from the Norwegian Refugee Council, a small housing project was undertaken near Hpa-An to provide houses for returning refugees and encourage them to settle in the area. However, refugees were not interested in the location, so the houses were eventually given to a different population group.

It has also been suggested by the respondents that the government-supported development of IZs in the state has the objective of providing employment opportunities not only for the state's residents, but also for returning refugees in the future.

### **6.2.3 NGOs and DPOs**

There appears to be a significant service gap in providing livelihood support to people with disabilities in general in Karen state. Most stakeholders in this area tend to focus on landmine victims, but as one of the local experts suggested, the overall awareness about disability remains extremely low.

For example, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) provides rehabilitation services to people with disabilities in their hospital in Hpa-An, but have yet to introduce a livelihood support service for their clients. During the interview, the ICRC representative stated that the main livelihood for their clients is agriculture, and the training and other support should thus be focused on this sector to be of most relevance to local people.

With regard to vocational training, there is one organization, the Association for Aid and Relief, Japan (AAR Japan) that is dedicated to providing vocational training to people with disabilities. However, there are currently no training facilities in Hpa-An, and the selected participants are sent to Yangon. AAR's office in Hpa-An was established to target specifically landmine victims.

Overall, there are currently almost no activities or project aimed at providing livelihood support to people with disabilities in general in Karen state, and existing efforts are limited to landmine victims only. Returning refugees with disabilities in particular are not a focus of any organization in the area.

Myanmar Independent Living Initiative (MILI), a Yangon-based DPO providing support to people with a variety of disabilities in Myanmar, explained that people with disabilities, at least in Yangon, are primarily self-employed. The most typical jobs include sewing, hairdressing, petty trade, small repairs; those people with disabilities that are able to move relatively freely also engage in casual labor. People with mental and intellectual disabilities have the least amount of livelihood opportunities available to them. According to MILI, some of their beneficiaries with mental or intellectual disabilities are involved in producing handicrafts. MILI provides small grants (\$500) to both individuals and groups to support their income generating activities, but currently only up to 30 people are actively enrolled in this program due to MILI's resource constraints.

Because of this, MILI focuses primarily on awareness raising and capacity building and limits its active livelihood support based on available funds.

With regard to barriers to access for people with disabilities, MILI named ambiguous policy environment in the country as there are no clear rules or regulations to support employment of people with disabilities, as well as public attitude, which sometimes can lead to potential employers assuming that people with disabilities cannot perform necessary work duties. Physical barriers, such as access to public buildings, and overall lack of education among the target group are also significant barriers to income generation.

While there are several NGOs in Myanmar working on supporting livelihood projects for various target groups, virtually no organization extends their services to people with disabilities specifically. Officially, Department of Social Welfare within the Ministry of Labor is responsible for providing assistance to people with disabilities, but only 1% of the government budget is allocated to this department.<sup>12</sup> To promote livelihood access for people with disabilities, the Asia-Pacific Development Center on Disability (APCD), based in Thailand, recently began conducting workshops and trainings in Myanmar on disability-inclusive agriculture with a focus on successful case studies. In 2013, in collaboration with Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the Nippon Foundation, conducted a regional workshop on disability-inclusive agribusiness in Thailand, which included panelists from Myanmar who presented their successful business case.<sup>13</sup>

According to the information from MILI, there are currently 24 active self-help groups for people with disabilities. In addition to MILI and a new HI office in Yangon, there are several NGOs that provide general services for people with disabilities that do not include direct livelihood support, such as Eden, Shwe Min Thar Foundation, The Leprosy Mission, Evidence Foundation, AAR Japan, Cambodia Trust and to some extent World Vision.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, it is possible to enhance existing programs and incorporate relevant elements to target them to people with disabilities in order to more efficiently use available resources and take advantage of existing relationship among the stakeholders, instead of starting an entirely new program. In addition, it is important to continue awareness raising efforts as current level of understanding of disability and social inclusion in Myanmar remains fairly low.

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<sup>12</sup> The Department of Social Welfare (DSW) is responsible for providing support services to the following eight areas: early childhood care and development, children and youth welfare, women welfare, elderly care, rehabilitation of people with disabilities, rehabilitation of recovering drug users, support to victims of human trafficking, as well as support and grant provision to volunteer organizations and public welfare service providers. More information about DSW's services for people with disabilities is available on the official website: <http://www.dsw.gov.mm/en/rehabilitation/rehabilitation-persons-disabilities>

<sup>13</sup> More information can be found here: <http://apcdfoundation.org/?q=system/files/Regional%20workshop%20on%20Disabilitiy-%20Inclusive%20Agribusiness%20Development.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> World Vision does not currently have a constant unit to administer projects for people with disabilities; related activities are subject to donor funds availability.

### 6.3 Conclusion

The purpose of this literature review and stakeholder interviews in Myanmar was to identify current and future livelihood opportunities and labor demand for specific skills that could be used to develop target livelihood support and vocational training programs for refugees with disabilities residing in the camps in order to prepare them for potential return to Myanmar. However, it is clear that there is still a significant lack of both national and state-level labor market information and more research is needed before any concrete recommendations can be made.

Nevertheless, two industries are consistently highlighted in existing sources of relevant information: agriculture, including livestock raising, and garment manufacturing, which is set to become a major source of employment in Karen state in the future. Given that Thai employers experience labor shortages in both agriculture and manufacturing in the areas outside the camps, there is scope for refugees to gain valuable work experience in these two industries in Thailand, and thereby enhance their employability upon their return to Myanmar. These findings are reflected in the recommendations in the following section.

## 7 Recommendations

The recommendations outlined below are grouped into four broad categories:

- Addressing identified barriers to livelihood opportunities for people with disabilities in the camps;
- Possible partnership opportunities for HI and other NGOs, including local Thai employers;
- Promoting livelihood options for people with disabilities in the camps;
- General recommendations.

### 7.1 Addressing identified barriers to livelihood opportunities in the camps

#### 7.1.1 Lack of information

It is evident through our research that the established information dissemination channels in each camp, particularly with regard to available job and grant opportunities, appear to be less accessible to refugees with disabilities. Specifically, section leaders play a significant role in delivering new information to the general population and, in some cases, are part of the decision-making process in distributing opportunities. It has been suggested that it may be customary for some section leaders to make the decision about people with disabilities willingness and ability to participate in grant programs and recruitment for them. Additionally, low literacy levels among the disabled population may be preventing their access to much of the information about new livelihood opportunities, which are often posted on notice boards in the camps.

To address this barrier, self-help groups should be supported to work with Camp Committees and section leaders to raise their awareness about people with disabilities' challenges in accessing information about job and grant opportunities, as well as information about types of work that can be performed by people with disabilities. Key livelihoods stakeholders should include a basic minimum of key rights of people with disabilities to access livelihoods included in materials used in training and awareness sessions. Consistent and explicit inclusiveness messages that target the key information dissemination points in camps' administration may have significant positive effect in increasing active access to information for refugees with disabilities.

Key livelihoods stakeholders in the camps should also provide notice of job opportunities through agreed-upon verbal communication mechanisms, which could include passing verbal information through the HI Disability Resource Centers. Technical advice could be sought from HI/others in the development of information & key livelihoods stakeholders should use accessible IEC approaches taking into account, low literacy levels and people with low vision, intellectual disabilities seeking from HI technical advice.

#### 7.1.2 Lack of skills and education

While certainly relevant for some employment options in the camps, for example those that require proficiency in multiple languages, it appears that refugees with disabilities are not entirely aware of their own capacity and minimum requirements for available jobs and support programs in the camps.

This could be mitigated through a case management approach, where a caseworker guides a person with a disability through available options to identify the best match or refer them to a training program, if necessary, as well as explain available options for obtaining grants and other financing options. To make this possible, stakeholders involved in vocational training and financing options provision should develop a referral mechanism that would ensure continuity of services to the target population: from identifying necessary training to successful completion to business plan development to securing start-up capital. In addition, successful cases of refugees with disabilities gaining employment or establishing a small business should be used as a case study to which beneficiaries could relate.

### **7.1.3 Lack of confidence**

Similar to the above barrier, this internal barrier could be addressed through one-on-one case guidance and peer mentoring programs, where refugees with disabilities who have successfully overcome their barriers could share their positive experience to help build confidence for those who lack it. Key livelihoods stakeholders could devise a program that identifies and supports these peer mentors in promoting a positive message about the types of jobs that people with disabilities can perform – and how to access these jobs. The already existing self-help groups in the camps could be strengthened to provide this type of peer support.

Key livelihood stakeholders should also incorporate confidence- and motivation-building elements into their training materials and put into place coaching and follow-up mechanisms to support refugees in the early stages of setting up their businesses.

The confidence of this population could also be raised through better knowledge of the job expectations and the practicing of necessary skills or physical movements prior to working. In the focus groups, many people with disabilities said that their lack of confidence came from fear of being turned down by a potential employer due to their disability. Livelihood organizations could also raise confidence levels either by identifying disability-friendly employers or by providing a safe space in which people with disabilities could practice explaining their abilities and limitations to employers.

Key livelihoods stakeholders could also provide training to people with disabilities on how to proactively adapt training and work environments. As part of the preparation of entering skills training or livelihoods programs, an initial introduction visit should be standard support to people with disabilities to familiarize themselves with the environment and to prepare the staff and other trainees to accommodate needs. In addition, key stakeholders in livelihoods and vocational training in the camps should be sensitized to etiquette in working with people with a range of different impairments.

### **7.1.4 Lack of accessible land**

Key stakeholders in land distribution should agree to target people with disabilities with distribution of the agricultural plots nearest to or inside the camps, especially those who have physical impairments and cannot walk long distances on a daily basis. Self-help groups should be supported to advocate their rights to land access, and livelihoods stakeholders should contribute

to push for the above actions by including them into infrastructure approaches designed with camp committee/camp leaders.

Additionally, coordinated approaches supporting transportation to livelihood activities such as agricultural work (including vocational training) should be set up/strengthened amongst key stakeholders to include people with disabilities.

### **7.1.5 Lack of start-up capital**

Based on the household survey findings, the majority of surveyed households have very limited financial experience and are likely to not fully understand the opportunities and requirements of existing grant and loan programs. Moreover, it appears that refugees with disabilities almost never join savings groups, which are required to qualify for certain financial programs in the camps.

Existing saving groups should be trained on how to include people with different types of disabilities into the groups, and key grant management stakeholders should ensure that they include people with disabilities in the distribution of loans. One way to ensure this would be to implement a quota of people with disabilities represented within saving group programs.

Through HI's efforts, there is at least one SHG group in each camp that, with some guidance from qualified HI staff, could serve as a platform to access financial resources within camps. SHGs are a useful initiative that could be further tailored and supported to better represent the livelihood interests of the beneficiaries.

In addition, basic financial education could be offered to people with disabilities on a regular basis in order to address the apparent lack of experience with savings and loan services. This is especially important considering that some grant programs requires applicants to attend business management training and then develop a viable business plan to qualify. It may be useful for beneficiaries to have some preliminary training in order to succeed in this program, even if it is limited to the most basic concepts. It may also be useful for grant management stakeholders to work with disability organizations to promote inclusiveness in the structure of their program and for social workers/facilitators of disability and livelihood stakeholders to participate directly or indirectly in the business training and savings group programs in order to better understand the benefits and potential barriers to accessing these activities when recommending them to clients.

When grants or loans are successfully dispersed, grant management should form part of a support package provided by the lending organization to all recipients, including people with disabilities.

## **7.2 Partnership recommendations**

Throughout our interviews with the main service providers in the camps, it became clear that there is significant interest among stakeholders to make their programs and services more inclusive of the most vulnerable population groups, including refugees with disabilities. However, in part due to significant lack of information about the disability situation in the camps and the constantly shifting population, there is a resulting lack of clarity on where to begin. As a result,



some programs are not explicitly inclusive of refugees with disabilities, which for this particular group, given its specific vulnerabilities, is often enough to be excluded from these programs.

Below are several concrete suggestions on how organizations working with the disabled population could leverage their experience and access to reliable information on refugees with disabilities to forge partnerships with interested stakeholders.

### **7.2.1 Women's Education for Advancement and Empowerment (WEAVE)**

WEAVE works with already established groups of women in the camps who have more advanced weaving skills. The organization provides start-up loans for livelihood projects for qualified women's groups, as well as subsequent access to market for their products.

WEAVE would be interested in engaging with other livelihoods stakeholders to develop women's groups that consist of refugees with disabilities and to improve accessibility by helping WEAVE to identify qualified female artisans to participate in their programs.

### **7.2.2 Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA)**

While ADRA has made efforts to accommodate refugees with disabilities in attending their courses, more could be done to ensure that refugees with disabilities not only enroll in training courses, but also complete them. Physical accessibility appears to be the main barrier for interested people with disabilities, according to our findings, which could be addressed through a number of ways. However, follow up and consistency of service is key, both of which could be improved by partnering with organizations that keep in constant contact with refugees with disabilities. Moreover, these organizations could establish a much-needed follow up practice with graduates to assess the efficiency and relevance of training, as well as provide additional support to its beneficiaries.

More generally, the type of training offered should have a clear focus on providing participants with those skills that match current labor demand by Thai employers located near the camps, as well as likely future labor demand in Karen state. While further research is needed on the specific skills in greatest demand in Karen state, skills related to the garment sector and other basic manufacturing activities are likely to enhance employability.

### **7.2.3 Local employers**

Obtaining employment outside the camps helps refugees with disabilities not only to improve their current livelihoods, but also to equip them with the practical skills and work experience that will make them more employable in the longer term, should they be repatriated. Accordingly, partnerships between livelihood stakeholders and employers near the camps that seek to provide employment opportunities for refugees with disabilities are an important tool through which to increase their self-reliance in the long term. This type of arrangement is particularly attractive given the significant levels of interest and labor needs among employers in Tak and Mae Hong Son provinces.

Considering the complexity and ambiguity of the current situation with employing refugees outside of the camps, as well as significant variations in practices from camp to camp, the scope

for implementing formal, large-scale partnerships with employers may be limited in the current environment. Nevertheless, there may be scope for piloting a more targeted approach that focuses on jobs placements in a particular sector near a particular camp.

As a first step, it is recommended that livelihood stakeholders initiate further discussions with employer organizations (notably the Tak Chamber of Commerce and the Tak chapter of the Thai Federation of Industries) regarding a scheme that seeks to place refugees with disabilities in jobs outside the camps. These discussions will help stakeholders to identify the particular districts and industry sectors that are best suited to piloting the initiative, based on employer need, the specific types of jobs that people with disabilities can perform, and the varying practices of each camp in permitting refugees to seek work outside the camp.

With this in mind, key livelihoods stakeholders could identify the specific types of jobs that people with various disabilities are interested in and able to perform (particularly in the agriculture, handicraft, manufacturing and hospitality sectors) and develop practical guidance for employers on how people with disabilities specific workplace needs can be accommodated at minimal cost to the employer. This material could include practical case studies of persons with various impairments who have been able to find productive employment – either in the local area, or elsewhere in jobs that are also common the local area.

Further work would be needed to determine the most appropriate dissemination channels for this awareness raising – whether it be through the employer organizations or through direct contact with individual employers.

The aim of such a program would be to begin the task of educating and informing employers about the contribution that people with disabilities can make to their workplace. In the short term, this may improve employment opportunities for local people with disabilities who are not refugees. In the longer term, it would increase employers' understanding and preparedness to hire refugees with disabilities, should a change in Government policy make this easier for employers to undertake.

Given that the success of any job placement initiative will depend in part on the ease with which refugees are able to leave the camps to work in nearby areas, all stakeholders – including UNHCR, NGOs and Thai employer representatives – should engage in advocacy efforts with appropriate levels of government to support a policy change on the issue of refugees being able to exit the camps for work purposes. This advocacy should highlight the positive role that refugees can play in filling labor shortages experienced by Thai employers in the area, as well as the increased likelihood of successful repatriation where refugees have been able to acquire practical work skills prior to repatriation.

### **7.3 Livelihood options recommendations**

During our research, we assessed respondents' preferences for several existing livelihood options in the camps and identified the following two opportunities that are relatively accessible for refugees with disabilities.

### **7.3.1 Livestock raising**

Unlike casual labor in agriculture, livestock raising is less physically demanding and can be done from home on a small scale. There seems to be sufficient demand in the camps for this business to be profitable, especially considering the variety of animals that can be raised based on the demand of a particular market.

Most identified barriers, notably start-up capital, can be addressed through the measures outlined above. In addition, it should be recognized that some animals, such as pigs, require larger plots of land for raising, which is a challenge in more densely populated camps.

A more difficult challenge is the control of animal disease, which is related to supporting good practices in livestock raising. According to HI, half of the stock that the organization granted to refugees with disabilities in the past was reported to have died. Key livelihoods stakeholders should partner with organizations that specialize in livestock and veterinary support to minimize these losses. Having professional support available would also raise the confidence of people in the camps to invest in livestock as a livelihood and decrease the risk of default on loans that support livelihood activities.

### **7.3.2 Petty trade**

Similarly to livestock raising, petty trade is relatively easy to establish and manage from home, which is a suitable fit for refugees with physical impairments. Moreover, the flexible nature of petty trade allows for adjusting to local market demand and rapidly changing conditions and can include both small items and vegetables from own production, as well as reselling.

Need for start-up capital can be addressed through the measures outlined above.

## **7.4 General recommendations**

### **7.4.1 Strengthen Self-help Groups**

Data collected from this study continually reinforced the importance of groups and networks to access services in the camps, especially financial support. For this target population, in particular, the potential benefits of collective action are extremely high, especially in terms of advocating for more accessible services and lowering the cost of solutions to overcoming existing barriers both for people with disabilities and service providers.

As the main group specifically for refugees with disabilities that currently operates in the camps, SHGs could expand their mandate and take on more activities to address the needs of their members. To accomplish this, though, it is anticipated that the groups would need more hands-on support from an organization such as HI. During the interviews conducted with SHGs in each camp, it was found that only a small percentage of people with disabilities belonged to the groups and that the SHGs were not undertaking organized livelihood activities to help their members at this time. When asked why more people with disabilities weren't joining the groups, lack of knowledge in the camp about the group and lack of funding to undertake activities to attract more members were commonly mentioned.

Accessing start-up capital through group-centered savings and loan programs should be a major focus of the capacity building of these groups. In addition, SHGs could serve as a platform for refugees with disabilities to be better connected to other camp services, including:

- Advocating for agricultural rental plots in more accessible locations;
- Organizing and lowering the cost of collective transportation;
- Working with vocational training providers to make trainings more accessible and to increase knowledge of the services within the disabled population.

The SHGs could also further support livelihoods by conducting outreach to section leaders or other camp authorities to ensure that information about jobs and other opportunities is disseminated in the disabled population and by sharing resources (human and financial) to initiate livelihood projects that are tailored to the needs of the group's members. While it is currently not in their mandate to do so, SHGs are the main groups for refugees with disabilities, as mentioned above, and could experiment with expanding their support into livelihoods as there are no other tailored services available for the target group. In addition, other livelihood and vocational training stakeholders in the camps could support SHGs mobilization efforts by alleviating some of the costs (since SHGs are entirely voluntary) through providing transportation for refugees with disabilities to get to the livelihood and training-related meetings and possibly per diems, as well as potentially include food support to information dissemination packages.

#### **7.4.2 Advocate for policy change to facilitate refugees' access to employment opportunities outside of the camps**

The feasibility of advocacy in this case is contingent upon the political environment in Thailand, which has been consistently changing over the past couple of years, and is thus understandably challenging. Nevertheless, an argument could be made that the benefit of easing refugees' access to employment opportunities outside of the camps will be two-fold:

- In view of potential voluntary repatriation, refugees will develop a transferrable skill set that will help them to find employment upon return and ease their transition, especially if involved in the agriculture and garment manufacturing industries;
- Refugees could significantly alleviate current labor shortages in surrounding districts and support local economy, as evident from the interviews with local Thai employers conducted for this study.

#### **7.4.3 Explore the possibility of expanding services into Karen State**

During qualitative interviews in Hpa-an in Karen State, a lack of services and advocacy for people with disabilities was highlighted by key stakeholders, including ICRC. Although certain organizations are working with survivors of landmine accidents, there is a reported gap in service providers working with the broader disabled population.

Although the political dynamics of working in Karen State will make implementation challenging, institutional risks can be mitigated by close cooperation with state and local governments in advance of activities. A needs assessment would also be necessary to verify and gather more detailed data on the perceived needs gap in order to create an intervention that is specifically targeted to the context in Karen State. In developing an intervention in this area, organizations

need to be mindful of the fact that most repatriated refugees with disabilities to date choose to stay along the border and cannot easily access any services that may be provided in the more central locations in Karen State. Key stakeholders would need to have a clear focus for any activities commenced in Karen State – targeting either people with disabilities in Karen State more generally (rather than returning refugees with disabilities) or repatriated refugees living in remote locations close to the Thai border, dependent on restrictions.

A less ambitious strategy would be to build relationships in Hpa-An and develop tailored programs that could be implemented quickly in the event that larger numbers of repatriated refugees begin returning to Hpa-An and surrounding areas in the future.

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## Appendix I

### Household Economy Questionnaire

**Project: Refugee Livelihoods and Income Generating Opportunities Study**

**Target Respondents: Refugee households in Mae La, Nu Po, Umpiem Mai, and Mae La Oon**

#### 1. IDENTIFICATION

1.a Date:				1.b Start Time:					1.c Household number
1.d Camp				1.e Researcher ID					
Mae La 1	Nu Po 2	Umpiem Mai 3	Mae La Oon 4	A	B	C	D	E	

#### INTRODUCTION:

My name is [name] from a research firm called Emerging Markets Consulting. We are working with Handicap International, a non-profit organization that works to improve lives of people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups. In this interview we would like to ask about your household, learn how you generate your income and what skills and opportunities you have. Any information you provide will be strictly confidential; you will not be identified in any way.

#### 2. DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

I would like to learn about your household. Could you please tell me about the people who have been living in this house for the **last 6 months** and usually take meals together?

Household composition	Total	Male	Female
2.a How many people live in this household?			
2.b How many adults live in this household? (18-60)			
2.c How many people older than 60 live in this household?			
2.d How many children under 5 live in this household?			
2.e How many children between ages 5-17 live in this household?			

2.f Does anyone in the household have difficulties with any of the following? (read answers and check all that apply)			
Indicate household member (for example, 24m for 24 year old male)	Yes – some difficulty	Yes – a lot of difficulty	Cannot do at all
Do you have difficulty seeing, even if wearing glasses?			
Do you have difficulty hearing, even if using a hearing aid?			
Do you have difficulty walking or climbing steps?			
Do you have difficulty remembering or concentrating?			
Do you have difficulty (with self-care such as) washing all over or dressing?			

Using your usual (customary) language, do you have difficulty communicating, for example understanding or being understood?			
Don't know			
No response			

2.g Who is the head of the family?	Male adult 1	Female adult 2	Other..... 9			
2.h When did you migrate to Thailand?	Before 1986 1	Between 1986-2005 2	After 2005 3			
2.i Which type of ration book do you have?	Mol/UNHCR 1	Verified by TBC 2	Not registered/not verified 3	Mixed 4		
2.j How many persons are on your ration book?	Adults .....			Children under 5 .....		
2.k What is the highest level of education <b>anyone</b> in this household has?	None 1	Primary 2	Secondary 3	Higher 4		
2.l What is your religion?	Buddhist 1	Christian 2	Muslim 3	Other..... 9		
2.m What is your ethnic group?	Karen 1	Shan 2	Mon 3	Burmese 4	Other ..... 9	
2.n What kind of ID card do you have?	None 1	Mol ID/UNHCR 2	PAB ID 3	Thai ID 4	Several ..... 5	Other ..... 9

### 3. ASSETS

Agricultural assets					
3.a Agricultural land outside the camp	None 1	Rented 2	Owned 3	Size (rai) .....	Main crops .....
3.b Number of fruit trees	None 1	.....			
3.c Size of household garden	None 1	.....rai/meters			
3.d Animals	None 1	# currently owned .....		# sold last 12 months .....	

Financial assets							
3.e Money savings (either in cash or in bank)	None 1	Yes					
If yes, please specify		At home 2	Savings group 3	Bank 4			
3.f Debts	None 1	Yes					
If yes, please specify		Microfinance 2	Savings group 3	Personal (friends, family) 4	Other ..... 9		
Loan purpose (education, medical expenses, etc.).....							
Social assets							
3.g Relatives	None 1	In camp 2	Other camp 3	Province 4	BKK/other town 5	Myanmar 6	Abroad 7



3.h Member of networks (CBOs, women's groups, DPOs, self-help groups, etc.)	None 1	Yes 2
If yes, please describe your network/organization and your involvement: ..... .....		

Physical assets								
3.i Shelter quality and facilities (can be several)	None 1	Small 2	Normal 3	Big house 4	Toilet 5	Own shop 6	Rented shop 7	
3.j Electronic appliances	None 1	TV 2	Radio 3	Cell phone 4		Computer 5	Other ..... 9	
3.k Transportation means	None 1	Own bicycle 2	Rented bicycle 3	Own moto 4	Rented moto 5	Own car 6	Rented car 7	Several ..... 8
3.l Productive assets (equipment that you use to earn money)	None 1				Yes 2			
3.m If yes, please indicate type	Weaving loom 1	Welding and cutting equipment 3		Woodworking tools 4	Handicraft making tools		Other ..... 9	

#### 4. SOURCES OF INCOME

I would like to know more about how your household generates income. More than one answer is possible.

4.a What was your <b>main</b> livelihood before migrating to Thailand?	Agriculture 1	Casual labor (non-agri) 2	Skilled labor (specify) ..... 3	Trade (shop) 4	Other..... 9
4.b Did you receive any cash income in the last 6 months, including remittances?	No 1			Yes 2	
4.c What kind of livelihood would you like to pursue now?	Agriculture 1	Casual labor (non-agri) 2	Skilled labor (specify) ..... 3	Trade (shop) 4	Other..... 9
Cash income					
4.d How much did your household earn in total per month? (average last 6 months, <b>not</b> including remittances)	.....baht				
4.e How much did your household receive in remittances per month? (average last 6 months)	None 1			Yes .....baht	
4.f How much income do you think your household needs every month to cope?	.....baht				
4.g How do you see your household coping?	Not well at all 1	Below average 2	Average 3	Better than average 4	

Income sources (select several, if applicable)					
4.h Self-employment (specify).....	No 1	Yes 2	4.o Petty trade (small scale, inexpensive items)	No 1	Yes 2
4.i Fixed employment/stipend worker (at least three days/week)	No 1	Yes 2	4.p Sell food from own production (crops, livestock) or processing (drinks, cakes, etc.)	No 1	Yes 2

4.j Part time employment (specify).....	No 1	Yes 2	4.q Sell part of food ration	No 1	Yes 2
4.k Casual labor in agriculture	No 1	Yes 2	4.r Making and selling handicrafts/weaving	No 1	Yes 2
4.l Casual labor in construction	No 1	Yes 2	4.s Collection/sale of firewood and charcoal	No 1	Yes 2
4.m Skilled labor (carpentry, welding, etc.)	No 1	Yes 2	4.t Collection/sale of grass	No 1	Yes 2
4.n Shop keeper # of employees (non-family) .....	No 1	Yes 2	4.u Other .....	No 1	Yes 2

## 5. SKILLS AND PREVIOUS TRAINING

Previous training							
5.a Has anyone in your household ever taken a vocational training course?			None 1		Yes 2		
If yes, please describe the course and organization ..... .....							
5.b If yes, have you been able to generate income using the skills you learned to generate income?			None 1		Yes 2		
5.c Is vocational training currently available to members of your household?			None 1		Yes 2		
5.d Do you think you need additional training to pursue your desired livelihood option?			None 1		Yes 2		
Existing skills in the household (select several, if applicable; self-assess level of proficiency)							
5.e Cooking	Basic အခြေခံ 1	Medium အလယ် လတ် 2	Advanced ကျင့်မှူးဝက် 3	5.n Thai language	Basic 1	Medium 2	Advanced 3
5.f Housekeeping and domestic services	Basic 1	Medium 2	Advanced 3	5.o Other language (specify) .....	Basic 1	Medium 2	Advanced 3
5.g Handicraft making	Basic 1	Medium 2	Advanced 3	5.p Computer and IT	Basic 1	Medium 2	Advanced 3
5.h Weaving	Basic 1	Medium 2	Advanced 3	5.q Accounting	Basic 1	Medium 2	Advanced 3
5.i Construction	Basic 1	Medium 2	Advanced 3	5.r Sewing	Basic 1	Medium 2	Advanced 3
5.j Carpentry	Basic 1	Medium 2	Advanced 3	5.s Mechanical repairs	Basic 1	Medium 2	Advanced 3
5.k Driving	Basic 1	Medium 2	Advanced 3	5.t Electric repairs	Basic 1	Medium 2	Advanced 3
5.l Agriculture-related	Basic 1	Medium 2	Advanced 3	5.u Customer service	Basic 1	Medium 2	Advanced 3
5.m Burmese language	Basic 1	Medium 2	Advanced 3	5.v Other (specify) .....	Basic 1	Medium 2	Advanced 3

## Household Economy Approach

The quantitative household questionnaire used for this study was designed based on the Household Economy Approach (HEA) developed by Save the Children in 2000. The core element of this approach is to be able to classify the surveyed households by the level of vulnerability

through collecting relevant data on assets, expenditures, education and skills and access to social networks. This classification can then be used to tailor service provision and other support programs according to the needs of each household group. However, in this study HEA approach was adapted to better reflect both the target group (refugee households with members with disabilities) and project objectives. As a result, the questionnaire did not collect information on expenditures, but instead focused on available assets and income sources, as well as existing skills. In addition, the questionnaire employed the Washington Group table on collecting disability information on the target group.

## Appendix II

### Focus Group Discussion Guide

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**Project: Refugee Livelihoods and Income Generating Opportunities Study**

- **Target Group 1: People with disabilities that are currently employed**
- **Target Group 2: People with disabilities that are not currently employed**

**Number of Participants: 6 per Group (approximately half men and half women)**

**Number of Focus Groups: 2 in each camp (one for each target group)**

---

Facilitator	
Asst facilitator #1	
Asst facilitator #2	
Date	
Place	

#### Introduction

**The interviewer starts by introducing him/herself as follows:**

I am [name] from Emerging Markets Consulting. My organization is working in collaboration with Handicap International, a nonprofit organization that works to improve the lives of people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups. We're conducting a study of employment opportunities for refugees in your area.

We would like to learn about your knowledge and opinions on finding and securing employment opportunities. The discussion may take about 2 hours but will be flexible according to discussion flow. We won't ask your name so you can feel free to speak openly. We would like you to feel comfortable and relaxed. You may choose not to answer any question and you may stop the interview at any time. If you agree, we will record the conversation in order to help our note takers gather information from the discussion. We will begin with a short written form and then spend the rest of them time discussing questions that I have prepared in advance. Do you have any questions for us before we begin?

#### Demographic Information (to be filled out individually prior to the discussion)

<b>Do you agree to participate in this focus group?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
<b>Age</b>	
<b>Gender</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female
<b>Ethnicity (circle)</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Karen <input type="checkbox"/> Shan <input type="checkbox"/> Mon <input type="checkbox"/> Burmese <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify _____)
<b>Home village/town/region or state</b>	
<b>Family size and number of siblings</b>	

<b>Marital status</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Married <input type="checkbox"/> Not married																																					
<b>What is the highest level of education you attended?</b>  (check one box)	<input type="checkbox"/> = No formal education <input type="checkbox"/> = Primary <input type="checkbox"/> = Secondary <input type="checkbox"/> = University or above																																					
<b>Education/economic status</b>  (check all boxes that apply)	<input type="checkbox"/> Still in school <input type="checkbox"/> Currently in vocational training <input type="checkbox"/> Employed <input type="checkbox"/> Self-employed <input type="checkbox"/> Unemployed, but looking for a job <input type="checkbox"/> Unemployed and not looking for a job																																					
<b>Do you have difficulties with any of the following?</b>  (check all boxes that apply)	<input type="checkbox"/> Hearing (even if wearing a hearing aid) <input type="checkbox"/> Seeing (even if wearing glasses) <input type="checkbox"/> Speaking <input type="checkbox"/> Moving your legs or feet <input type="checkbox"/> Moving your arms or hands <input type="checkbox"/> Feelings of sadness <input type="checkbox"/> Feelings of anxiety/nervousness <input type="checkbox"/> Thinking/remembering/understanding others <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify _____)																																					
<b>Work experience</b>  (check all boxes that apply)	<table border="1" style="width:100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="width:70%;"></th> <th style="width:30%;">Industry</th> <th style="width:30%;">Number of years</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Domestic services</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Factory</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Hotel/Guesthouse</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Restaurant/Tea house</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Tourism-related services (guides, travel agents, etc.)</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Construction</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td rowspan="3"><input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify)</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3"><input type="checkbox"/> No previous work experience</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>			Industry	Number of years	<input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture			<input type="checkbox"/> Domestic services			<input type="checkbox"/> Factory			<input type="checkbox"/> Hotel/Guesthouse			<input type="checkbox"/> Restaurant/Tea house			<input type="checkbox"/> Tourism-related services (guides, travel agents, etc.)			<input type="checkbox"/> Construction			<input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify)							<input type="checkbox"/> No previous work experience				
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	Income Source	Amount per month																																				

<b>Current income (check the appropriate box)</b>	From work		
	Other income (specify)		

## Focus Group Discussion Guide

### **Target Group 1: People with disabilities that are currently employed**

#### **I – Training and Work Experience**

1. Where do you work? What kind of work do you do?
2. How did you find your current job? How have you found jobs in the past?
3. What kind of skills or prior experience did you need?
  - a. What documents were required to get the job?
4. Did you get any training at work? Please explain.
  - a. Was it useful?
  - b. What did you like about it? What didn't you like?
5. Did you get any training prior to starting that job?
  - a. If yes, what training organization?
  - b. Was it helpful in finding employment?

#### **II – Barriers to Livelihoods and Income Generation**

1. What type of work do the majority of the people of your gender do in your community?
  - a. Are you able to participate in this kind of work? If no, why not?
2. How much influence did your family have in your decisions about the type of livelihoods you pursue?
3. What has your experience been when dealing with potential employers?
4. What barriers have you felt or experienced regarding employment?
  - a. Internal barriers (personal feelings, such as isolation, lack of confidence, lack of motivation, etc.)
  - b. External barriers (family attitude, lack of information, employer bias and attitude, mobility and physical access, other social factors and practices, government policy, etc.)
5. What helped you to overcome these barriers?

6. What would your advice be to others in terms of feeling able to work and then finding work to do?

### **III – Professional Aspirations**

1. What type of business would you like to work in? Why?
2. What barriers or factors are preventing you from this kind of work?
3. Have you ever considered self-employment (starting your own business)? Why or why not?

## **Target Group 2: People with disabilities that are NOT currently employed but would like to be employed or have sought employment in the past**

### **I – Training and Work Experience**

1. Have you worked in the past? What kind of work did you do?
  - a. How have you found jobs in the past?
  - b. What kind of skills or prior experience did you need?
2. Are training programs currently available to you?
  - a. Have you used them?
  - b. Are they helpful in finding employment?

### **II – Barriers to Livelihoods and Income Generation**

1. Are you currently looking for employment? If no, why not?
2. What type of work do the majority of the people of your gender do in your community?
  - a. Are you able to participate in this kind of work? If no, why not?
3. How much influence does your family have in your career decisions?
  - a. If family does not want you to work, do they feel like you will:
    - i. be unsafe at work?
    - ii. be unsafe going to/from work?
    - iii. face discrimination from colleagues if you work?
    - iv. not be able to do what you are asked?
    - v. other
4. What has your experience been when dealing with potential employers?
  - a. Can you discuss the reasons that employers have given you for not hiring you or what they have said when you sought work with them?
  - b. Do you think these are legitimate concerns? If no, what do you think their reasons really are?
5. What barriers have you felt or experienced regarding employment?
  - a. Internal barriers (personal feelings, such as isolation, lack of confidence, lack of motivation, etc.)
  - b. External barriers (family attitude, lack of information, employer bias and attitude, mobility and physical access, other social factors and practices, government policy, etc.)
6. What would help you to overcome the barriers we've discussed today?

### **III – Professional Aspirations**

1. What type of business would you like to work in? Why?
2. What barriers or factors are preventing you from this kind of work?
3. Have you ever considered self-employment (starting your own business)? Why or why not?

## Appendix III

### Employer Questionnaire

**Project: Refugee Livelihoods and Income Generating Opportunities Study**

**Target Respondents: Employers in Tak and Mae Hong Son provinces, including (but not limited to) employers located in the vicinity of the four camps in this study**

#### 6. IDENTIFICATION (TO BE FILLED OUT BEFORE THE INTERVIEW)

1.01 Date: / /	1.02 Start Time:	1.03 Questionnaire number:	1.04 Researcher ID:	
1.05 Village				
1.06 Zone or section				
1.07 District	<input type="checkbox"/>	1 = Mueang Tak	<input type="checkbox"/>	1 = Mae Hong Son
	<input type="checkbox"/>	2 = Ban Tak	<input type="checkbox"/>	2 = Khun Yuam
	<input type="checkbox"/>	3 = Sam Ngao	<input type="checkbox"/>	3 = Pai
	<input type="checkbox"/>	4 = Mae Ramat	<input type="checkbox"/>	4 = Mae Sariang
	<input type="checkbox"/>	5 = Tha Song Yang	<input type="checkbox"/>	5 = Mae La Noi
	<input type="checkbox"/>	6 = Mae Sot	<input type="checkbox"/>	6 = Sop Moei
	<input type="checkbox"/>	7 = Phop Phra	<input type="checkbox"/>	7 = Pangmapha
	<input type="checkbox"/>	8 = Umphang		
	<input type="checkbox"/>	9 = Wang Chao		
1.08 Nearest camp	<input type="checkbox"/>	1 = Nu Po		
	<input type="checkbox"/>	2 = Umpiem Mai		
	<input type="checkbox"/>	3 = Mae La		
	<input type="checkbox"/>	4 = Mae La Oon		
1.09 Approximate distance to camp (select km or minutes)	1= _____ km	2= _____	_____ mins walk	

#### INTRODUCTION:

*My name is [name] from a research firm called Emerging Markets Consulting. We are working with Handicap International, a non-profit organization that works to improve lives of people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups. We are conducting research on employment opportunities in Tak province.*

*In this interview we would like to ask for your insights and opinions on employment opportunities in your local area – both for people with disabilities and the broader community. Any information you provide will be strictly confidential; you will not be identified in any way.*



## 7. SCREENING QUESTION

<p>1.10 Do you employ workers other than your family members? (ie. workers who are not your family)</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>1 = No, never</p> <p><b><u>Stop interview</u></b></p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>2 = Yes (currently or sometimes)</p> <p><b><i>Continue interview</i></b></p>
---	--------------------------	--	--------------------------	---

## 8. ABOUT THE BUSINESS

1.11 Interviewee name				
1.12 Interviewee position	<input type="checkbox"/>	1 = Owner		
	<input type="checkbox"/>	2 = Other (please specify): _____		
1.13 Business name (if any)				
1.14 Main business activity				
1.15 Industry	<input type="checkbox"/>	1 = Agriculture / farming		
	<input type="checkbox"/>	2 = Agribusiness (post-processing, related services, distribution, etc.)		
	<input type="checkbox"/>	3 = Handicrafts		
	<input type="checkbox"/>	4 = Manufacturing / industrial		
	<input type="checkbox"/>	5 = Hospitality (accommodation or food)		
	<input type="checkbox"/>	6 = Other (please specify: _____)		
1.16 When did this business commence operations? (select commencement year or number of years ago)	1 =	_____ YYYY	2 =	_____ years ago
1.17 How many permanent employees? (at least 3 days per week, most of the year)				
1.18 Do you sometimes hire casual or part-time employees? (less than 3 days per week or only for certain times of the year)	<input type="checkbox"/>	1 = No	<input type="checkbox"/>	2 = Yes
1.19 If "Yes" to 1.18, how many casual or part-time staff do you usually hire? Give details of types of activities & times of year.	Usual number of casual employees	1 =		
	Type of activity	2 =		
	Times of the year or days per week or number of hours per day (months, seasons, etc.)	3 =		

	Other comments: <i>specify</i>		4 =			
1.20 Compared to <u>2 years ago</u> , has your total number of employees increased or decreased? (include casual/part-time employees)	<input type="checkbox"/>	1 = Increased	<input type="checkbox"/>	2 = No change (around the same)	<input type="checkbox"/>	3 = Decreased
1.21 In the <u>next 2 years</u> , do you expect your staff numbers to increase or decrease? (include casual/part-time employees)	<input type="checkbox"/>	1 = Probably increase	<input type="checkbox"/>	2 = No change (around the same)	<input type="checkbox"/>	3 = Probably decrease

## 9. LABOUR DEMAND AND SKILL NEEDS

1.22 What types of workers do you employ? Please specify each type of position.  <i>Select all that apply</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1 = Low-skilled agricultural labour (harvesting, planting, weeding)
	<input type="checkbox"/>	2 = Low-skilled manual labour, <u>non-agri</u> (factory worker, construction worker, warehouse)
	<input type="checkbox"/>	3 = Skilled manual labour (carpenter, welder, electrician, plumber)
	<input type="checkbox"/>	4 = Low-skilled service (waiter, cook, maid, cleaner)
	<input type="checkbox"/>	5 = Shop assistant / shopkeeper
	<input type="checkbox"/>	6 = Skilled professional (accountant, IT staff)
	<input type="checkbox"/>	7 = Manager / supervisor
	<input type="checkbox"/>	8 = Other (please specify): _____
1.23 What education level is required for most of your job positions?  <i>Select 1 (most common)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1 = No education or some primary
	<input type="checkbox"/>	2 = Completed primary
	<input type="checkbox"/>	3 = Some secondary
	<input type="checkbox"/>	4 = Completed secondary
	<input type="checkbox"/>	5 = Other (please specify): _____
1.24 What knowledge or skills do your employees need to perform their job well?  <i>Select all that apply.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1 = No skills
	<input type="checkbox"/>	2 = Basic knowledge of farming activities (planting, harvesting, etc.)
	<input type="checkbox"/>	3 = Able to count and do basic calculations (adding, subtracting)
	<input type="checkbox"/>	4 = Business skills (record-keeping, book-keeping, accounting, etc.)
	<input type="checkbox"/>	5 = Computer / IT skills (Microsoft Word, Excel, using the Internet)
	<input type="checkbox"/>	6 = Handicraft skills (weaving, sewing, etc.)
	<input type="checkbox"/>	7 = Technical trade skills (carpentry, construction, plumbing, electrical, welding, etc.)
	<input type="checkbox"/>	8 = Able to speak and understand Thai language

	<input type="checkbox"/>	9 = Able to read and write Thai language				
	<input type="checkbox"/>	10 = English language skills				
	<input type="checkbox"/>	11 = Other (please specify): _____				
1.25 What other attributes do your employees need to perform their job well?  <i>Select all that apply</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1 = Hard-working (good work ethic)				
	<input type="checkbox"/>	2 = Honest / trustworthy				
	<input type="checkbox"/>	3 = Physically fit or strong				
	<input type="checkbox"/>	4 = Other (please specify): _____				
1.26 Is it easy or difficult to find enough staff with the skills needed for the job?	<input type="checkbox"/>	1 = Very easy (not difficult at all)	<input type="checkbox"/>	2 = Slightly difficult	<input type="checkbox"/>	3 = Very difficult

## 10. WAGES AND WORKING CONDITIONS

1.27 On average, what wages do your staff earn? <i>(specify for each worker type; either daily or monthly wage)</i>	Type of worker (eg. low-skilled worker, shop assistant, carpenter, supervisor, etc.)	Daily wage	Monthly wage	Comment
1.28 How would you describe the physical nature of each type of job? Is it <u>physically difficult</u> or <u>challenging</u> ? <i>(please specify for each worker type)</i>	Type of worker (eg. low-skilled worker, shop assistant, carpenter, supervisor, etc.)	1 = Very difficult, challenging or tiring	2 = Slightly difficult, challenging or tiring	3 = Not difficult, challenging or tiring at all
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## 11. PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

1.29 Do you <i>currently employ</i> , or did you <i>previously employ</i> , anybody with some type disability?	<input type="checkbox"/>	1 = Yes, currently employ	<input type="checkbox"/>	2 = Previously employed, but not now	<input type="checkbox"/>	3 = No, never employed
1.30 <i>If 1.29 = 3:</i> If you have never employed a person with a disability, why not?  <i>Go to 1.34</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1 = No person with a disability has ever applied for a job				
	<input type="checkbox"/>	2 = I have never thought about it / Don't know				
	<input type="checkbox"/>	3 = They could not do the job properly				
	<input type="checkbox"/>	4 = They would be too slow				
	<input type="checkbox"/>	5 = Other (please specify): _____				

<p>1.31 <i>If 1.29 = 1 or 2:</i> If you currently or previously employed a person or persons with a disability, please specify their type of disability</p> <p><i>Use "Person 2" and "Person 3" if you have employed more than one person with disabilities; use extra space at the end of the questionnaire if you have employed more than three people</i></p> <p><i>Continue to 1.32</i></p>	<i>Person 1</i>	<i>Person 2</i>	<i>Person 3</i>			
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1 = Seeing (blind or low vision)		
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2 = Hearing (deaf or very difficult to hear)		
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	3 = Speech (difficult or unable to talk)		
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	4 = Movement (difficult or unable to move freely – walking, climbing, bending, lifting, carrying)		
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	5 = Learning or development disability (difficulty in learning, understanding, thinking)		
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	6 = Psychological or behavioral disability or mental health problem		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	7 = Other (please specify): _____			
1.32 Did you need to make any specific allowances or provide extra help to enable the person to perform their job effectively?	<input type="checkbox"/>	1 = No, nothing special	<input type="checkbox"/>	2 = Yes (specify): _____		
1.33 Overall, were you satisfied with the person's ability to do their job effectively?	<input type="checkbox"/>	1 = Very satisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>	2 = Somewhat satisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>	3 = Not satisfied at all
1.34 Would you be prepared to hire people with disabilities in the future?	<input type="checkbox"/>	1 = Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	2 = No	<input type="checkbox"/>	3 = Don't know / not sure
<p>1.35 <i>If 1.34 = 1:</i> What would encourage you to employ people with disabilities in the future?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1 = I would like to support people with disabilities in my community				
	<input type="checkbox"/>	2 = They have strong work ethics (reliable, hardworking, etc.)				
	<input type="checkbox"/>	3 = They have specific skills that are required to do the job				
	<input type="checkbox"/>	4 = I receive benefits/assistance from an NGO/DPO (training, wage subsidy, etc.)				
	<input type="checkbox"/>	5 = Other (please specify): _____				
	<input type="checkbox"/>	6 = Don't know				
<p>1.36 <i>If 1.34 = 2:</i> What would prevent you or discourage you from employing a person with a disability?</p> <p><i>Select all that apply</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1 = They definitely could not do the jobs in my business				
	<input type="checkbox"/>	2 = I don't know what sort of work they are able to do				
	<input type="checkbox"/>	3 = There are other people who could do the job faster or better				
	<input type="checkbox"/>	4 = I worry I would need to spend extra time or money to help them				
	<input type="checkbox"/>	5 = Other (please specify): _____				

	<input type="checkbox"/>	6 = Don't know
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## 12. SOURCES OF EMPLOYMENT (MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES)

Now, I would like to ask you some questions about your experience in hiring people from Myanmar, both migrants and refugees. This information will help Handicap International to assist these people to find employment. Any information you provide will be strictly confidential, and you will not be identified to any other organization or Government authority. You will not be identified in any way.

<p>1.37 What types of people have you hired (either now or previously)?</p> <p><i>Select all that apply</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1 = Local Thais from Tak or Mae Hong Son provinces
	<input type="checkbox"/>	2 = Thais from other provinces
	<input type="checkbox"/>	3 = Migrants from Myanmar
	<input type="checkbox"/>	4 = Refugees from the camps
	<input type="checkbox"/>	5= Other (please specify): _____

***If hire migrants from Myanmar or refugees from the camps – either now or in the past:***

<p>1.38 How do migrants or refugees find out about jobs in your business? Who is the primary contact or agent through which you recruit migrants or refugees?</p> <p><i>Select all that apply</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1 = Word of mouth – through other migrants or refugees
	<input type="checkbox"/>	2 = Village chief
	<input type="checkbox"/>	3 = Refugee camp committee
	<input type="checkbox"/>	4 = Thai camp authorities / officials
	<input type="checkbox"/>	5 = Other (specify): _____
	<input type="checkbox"/>	6 = Additional comments: _____
<p>1.39 What sort of work arrangement do (did) the migrants / refugees have?</p> <p><i>Select all that apply</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1 = Permanent, regular employment (at least 3 days per week, most of the year)
	<input type="checkbox"/>	2 = Day labour
	<input type="checkbox"/>	3 = Hire for short period (1 week to 2 months)
	<input type="checkbox"/>	4 = Other (specify): _____
	<input type="checkbox"/>	5 = Additional comments: _____
<p>1.40 What sort of work documents do these migrants or refugees need to work for you?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1 = No work documents
	<input type="checkbox"/>	2 = Work permit from Thai camp authorities (short-term permit)
	<input type="checkbox"/>	3 = One-year migrant work permit
	<input type="checkbox"/>	4 = Other (specify): _____
	<input type="checkbox"/>	5 = Don't know

	<input type="checkbox"/>	6 = Additional comments: _____				
1.41 Where do these migrants/refugees sleep each night?	<input type="checkbox"/>	1 = At their homes in the village/town				
	<input type="checkbox"/>	2 = Accommodation onsite provided by the employer (eg. .dormitories)				
	<input type="checkbox"/>	3 = Return to the camp to sleep				
	<input type="checkbox"/>	4 = Other (specify): _____				
	<input type="checkbox"/>	5 = Don't know				
1.42 How do refugees get from the camp to the work location?	<input type="checkbox"/>	1 = They get picked up from the camp (car/bus/truck)				
	<input type="checkbox"/>	2 = Walk				
	<input type="checkbox"/>	3 = Don't know				
	<input type="checkbox"/>	4 = Other (specify) _____				
1.43 What sort of work do (did) these migrants or refugees perform?  <i>Select all that apply</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1 = Low-skilled agricultural labour (harvesting, planting, weeding)				
	<input type="checkbox"/>	2 = Low-skilled manual labour, <u>non</u> -agri (factory worker, construction worker, warehouse)				
	<input type="checkbox"/>	3 = Skilled manual labour (carpenter, welder, electrician, plumber)				
	<input type="checkbox"/>	4 = Low-skilled service (waiter, cook, maid, cleaner)				
	<input type="checkbox"/>	5 = Shop assistant / shopkeeper				
	<input type="checkbox"/>	6 = Skilled professional (accountant, IT staff)				
	<input type="checkbox"/>	7 = Other (please specify): _____				
	<input type="checkbox"/>	8 = Additional comments: _____				
1.44 On average, what wages do (did) you pay refugees? <i>(please specify average for each worker type; either daily or monthly wage)</i>	Type of worker (eg. low-skilled worker, shop assistant, carpenter, etc.)	Daily wage	Monthly wage	Comment		
1.45 Overall, are (were) you satisfied with the performance of these migrant/refugee workers?	<input type="checkbox"/>	1 = Very satisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>	2 = Somewhat satisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>	3 = Not satisfied at all
1.46 In the <u>past 12 months</u> , has it got easier or harder to hire migrants/refugees? Please explain.	<input type="checkbox"/>	1 = Easier	<input type="checkbox"/>	2 = No change	<input type="checkbox"/>	3 = Harder
		4 = Please explain: _____				
1.47 Have you ever hired a migrant or refugee who had a disability?	<input type="checkbox"/>	1 = Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	2 = No	<input type="checkbox"/>	3 = Don't know / Don't remember

1.48 In the future, would you ever consider hiring a migrant or refugee with a disability?	<input type="checkbox"/>	1= Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	2= No	<input type="checkbox"/>	3= Don't know / Not sure
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**Ask all interviewees:**

1.49 What are the challenges or barriers to refugees finding work in your area?  <i>Select all that apply</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1 = No challenges (it is easy for them to find work in this area)				
	<input type="checkbox"/>	2 = They don't have legal documents to work				
	<input type="checkbox"/>	3 = Employers worry about getting in trouble with the authorities				
	<input type="checkbox"/>	4 = They don't have the skills to find work				
	<input type="checkbox"/>	5 = They have a bad work ethic / attitude				
	<input type="checkbox"/>	6 = Not easy for them to leave the camp and get to work				
	<input type="checkbox"/>	7 = Local people don't trust them or don't like them				
	<input type="checkbox"/>	8 = Language (cannot speak, read or write Thai to necessary standard)				
	<input type="checkbox"/>	9 = Don't know				
	<input type="checkbox"/>	10 = Other (specify): _____				
1.50 Would you be interested in hiring refugees from the camps if it was easier or if it could be done officially?	<input type="checkbox"/>	1 = Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	2 = No	<input type="checkbox"/>	3 = Don't know / Not sure

**13. PARTNERSHIP POTENTIAL**

1.51 Would you be interested in receiving more information about opportunities to employ refugees and/or people with disabilities?  <i>Select all that apply. Leave blank if not interested.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1 = Refugees
	<input type="checkbox"/>	2 = Persons with disabilities (not refugees)
	<input type="checkbox"/>	3 = Refugees with disabilities
1.52 Would you be interested in partnering with Handicap International or other organizations to create employment opportunities for refugees and/or people with disabilities?  <i>Select all that apply. Leave blank if not interested.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1 = Refugees
	<input type="checkbox"/>	2 = Persons with disabilities (not refugees)
	<input type="checkbox"/>	3 = Refugees with disabilities

## Appendix IV

### Sampling Strategy for Quantitative Household Survey

After careful consideration of several available options, including general randomization and purposeful sampling, this study used stratified random sampling to identify respondent households for the quantitative household survey in the camps to ensure that the allocated sample size in each selected camp captures sufficient data from the households of interest, i.e. households with members with disability. Due to the resource constraints of this study, the initial sample size was calculated based on time allocated for this component and available enumerators capable of conducting data collection in both Burmese and Karen.

Consequently, the general population was defined as all households in the four target camps that have at least one member with a disability. The Information about these households was drawn from HI's datasets of registered people with a disability in each camp, including children. It should be noted that the information was recorded for individual members, who were then used as proxy units for households during the random selection. The datasets used in each camp were compiled by HI in 2014 and contained detailed information on each registered member with disability in the camps, including those who were not regular HI beneficiaries at the moment. These datasets are currently the most accurate source of information available on refugees with disabilities.

Based on the total number of households with refugees with disabilities in each of the selected camps, the sample size was divided between them proportionally. Then, a sampling interval was generated for each camp in relation to the total number of refugees with disabilities in that camp to identify remaining households, with the first household being randomly selected for each camp<sup>15</sup>.

In addition, given the high mobility of refugee population, our team in collaboration with local HI staff also selected replacement households in advance based on the following criteria: similar type and severity of impairment, followed by gender and similar age range. In practice, up to 15% of randomly selected households in each camp had to be replaced by alternative choices due to their unavailability at the moment of the data collection.

It should be noted that there are several limitations to the data collected for this study.

- First, all the conclusions drawn about the economy of refugee households are only applicable to those households that have a member with a disability and do not attempt to represent general refugee population.
- Second, even though our sample for each selected camp represented on average 10% of all target households included in the HI datasets in those camps, it is still relatively small to generate exhaustive information that would cover all the variation among target households.
- Although efforts were made to ensure systematic randomization of households selected for the survey, understandably difficult field conditions called for certain adjustments to the sampling procedure (as described above).

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<sup>15</sup> An internet-based randomization calculator was used for this procedure.



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